# CRESCENT AND GREEN

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*A miscellany of writings on Pakistan*

*With 12 pages of half-tone illustrations*

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# FOREWORD

IN 1947 the British Indian Empire was replaced by two successor States, India and Pakistan. Of these Pakistan was a new name. Its two wings situated in the north-west and north-east of the sub-continent joined to form a State—a State of sub-continental marches.

West Pakistan, an area stretching from the Karakorum and the Western Himalayas to the Arabian Sea, is irrigated by the Indus and its tributaries. It corresponds in extent, more or less, to the region where the prehistoric civilization of Mohenjo Daro thrived, contemporary in antiquity with the Sumerians and the ancient Egyptians, over two thousand years before the Christian era. In historical times the empire of the Achæmenids stretched well into this region, and brought in its wake the Hellenizing influence of Alexander's conquest. Here the art of Gandhara synthesized in a rare combination the serenity of the Buddhist faith with the representational beauty of Greek sculpture. Only once in history was the region which is to-day West Pakistan a part of a Hindu Empire—that of the Mauryas which, however, in the third generation turned Buddhist under the zealous leadership of the Great Asoka. Soon North-west Pakistan became a centre of Buddhist faith, under the Kushans, who ruled from their capital at Parashpura (modern Peshawar) an empire that stretched from Turkestan to the Arabian Sea. Under their benevolent rule the Mahayana School of Buddhism was perfected and carried across Tien Shan and the Mongolian deserts to the Far East.

With the advent of Islam, South-west Pakistan soon became a Province of a Muslim Empire that stretched from the Indus to the middle reaches of the Rhône. This was followed a couple of centuries later by the conquest of North-west

Pakistan by Muslim Turks who built new empires across Northern India and conquered the Eastern marches which to-day constitute East Bengal.

East Bengal, a land of many waters, fertility, and marshland throughout history, resisted the hegemony of the Hindu India. It became first a stronghold of Buddhism, then of Islam which was brought to its shores and estuaries by wave after wave of traders and saints who converted many other countries of South-east Asia to their faith, including Malaya and Indonesia.

Pakistan is a new country, but it has an ancient background and an old culture which it shares with the Middle East. It has inherited the art of painting from the Moguls who in their turn derived their inspiration from the Chinese. The Persian language has deeply influenced its literature, languages, and dialects. It developed a classical pattern of music which was accepted as perfect all over the sub-continent.

With the decline of the Moguls, the Muslim culture of the sub-continent received a set-back. The impact of Western civilization gave it, however, a new impetus after 1857 which culminated in the inspiring philosophy and poetry of Iqbal (d. 1938) and the political achievement of Pakistan by Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

This volume consists of contributions by a number of Western and Pakistani scholars on various aspects of the culture and heritage of Pakistan. These articles have been reprinted by the kind permission of the authors.

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# I

# PAKISTAN AS AN HISTORIAN SEES HER

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

WHEN I look at Pakistan, I see in her a characteristic sample of the contemporary world. Pakistan is the child of encounter and strife, and the rest of the contemporary world has been moulded by the same forces.

The world as a whole is suffering to-day from the sudden confrontation, at close quarters, of races, civilizations, and religions that have lived in isolation from one another in the past. Suddenly—as a result of 'the annihilation of distance' by technology—we have been compelled to live together on intimate terms, before we have had time to get to know and to understand one another and to adjust our behaviour to our neighbours' behaviour. This is a dangerous situation, and it is bound to last for some time, since technology has brought us all into physical juxtaposition far more quickly than the human psyche can adapt itself to this new physical situation. The psyche has a pace of its own, and, like a goat's or a mule's pace, this is a slow pace that cannot be speeded up.

Now in Pakistan I see the modern world's situation and problem in miniature. Pakistan is a child of the strife that has arisen from the impact of Islàm upon Hinduism. It is nearly a thousand years since Islam began to establish itself in India as a whole, and more than twelve hundred years since it gained its first footing in Sind and Multan. Yet the pace of the psyche's

the political capital of a country of eighty million inhabitants whose population is still rapidly increasing.

Perhaps this population problem will be the most serious one that Pakistan will have to grapple with in the next chapter of her history. The pressure of population is, I suppose, already acute in Eastern Pakistan, and even in Western Pakistan the future possibilities of water conservation and irrigation are not unlimited. This, too, is a problem that is common to the whole world, and we have no hope of solving it without world-wide co-operation.


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# PAKISTAN AND THE WEST

V. GORDON CHILDE

FOR archæology and ancient history the disinterment of the Indus civilization is still the most important event of the twentieth century. Till 1918 no one had dreamed that in the valley of the Indus existed a literate civilization fully comparable to those that flourished in the valleys of the Nile and the Tigris-Euphrates between 3000 and 2000 B.C. History, if such it could be called, seemed to begin with the unwritten hymns of the apparently illiterate Aryans who invaded the Punjab at some indeterminate date long after 2000 B.C. 'Cities' (*purah*) were indeed mentioned in the hymns, but *purah* were interpreted in the light of the hill-top refuges and fortified villages built by the barbarian Celts in Britain before the invasion of Julius Cæsar. Yet these illiterates were supposed to have brought to the Indus Valley from the west such rudiments of higher culture as metallurgy and the wheel, if not also such primary requisites for any progress as stock-breeding and agriculture themselves.

Thereafter a few words in Assyrian tablets (800–650 B.C.) gave evidence of some intercourse with the literate West. And Darius of Persia about 500 B.C. mentions the Seven River Land (Hapta Hindava) as a province of his far-flung Empire. But it was only after the annexation of that Empire by Alexander of Macedon (*c.* 325 B.C.) that the great sub-continent began to figure effectively in the general stream of Ancient History.


Indus Civilization
SITES
Cities
Towns and Villages
Other prehistoric sites
Modern Cities
Miles
50
0
50
100
150
N
Area of
Map
AFGHANISTAN
WEST PAKISTAN
INDIA
AFGHAN BORDER
IRANIAN BORDER
PAKISTAN BORDER
ARABIAN SEA
R. Indus
R. Jhelum
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BAHAWALPUR STATE
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Mohenjo-Daro
Lohumjo-Daro
Mitha Deheno
Pandi Wahi
Ali Murad
Lohri
Ghazi Shah
Damb Buthi
Gorandi
Dhal
Amri
Chanhu-Daro
Kotasur
Diji-ji-Takri
Karchat
Shahjo-Kotiro
Thano Bula Khan
Allahdino
Kulli
Shahi-Tump
Sutkagen-Dor

The excavations of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro completely transformed the scene. They exposed vast, orderly and populous cities giving every indication of huge accumulations of material and cultural capital, of formal government and of literacy that is taken as convenient criterion for distinguishing civilization from barbarism. In the sequel the recognition of distinctive products of the newly discovered civilization in the ruins of Ur, Kish, Eshnunna and other Mesopotamian cities not only enabled archæologists to date these 'prehistoric cities' more accurately than any local monument before the Buddhist age, but also demonstrated quite regular commercial intercourse between these two widely separated areas. A vision of regular caravans crossing the mountains and deserts of Iran, of fleets of dhows following the coast across the Arabian Sea and of Indus merchant colonies established in Ur and Kish, is by no means fanciful. The Indian merchant colony at Babylon described in the Baveru-Jataka must have had precursors before 2000 B.C. and long before Babylon became a capital. By that time, then, Pakistan was already in a position to contribute to the great cultural heritage transmitted to modern Europe and enriched by the Babylonians, Greeks and Arabs.

To define that contribution is impossible. The Indus script is undeciphered and extant texts do not look as if they would be very informative when read. We know *a priori* that the Indus people, just as much as the Babylonians, must have organized some of their knowledge as science. A decimal numeral notation, a system of socially approved weights and measuring instruments afford direct evidence for the science of mathematics. They can give no indication whether or not the Indus mathematicians had anticipated the remarkable achievements of the Babylonians in the direction of place-value, quadratic equations, series and 'Pythagoras' Theorem' (attested, be it noted, only after 1750 B.C.). In art the Indus sculptors and modellers may have anticipated the Greeks, but failed to

influence the formalism of Mesopotamian and Egyptian Bronze Age plastic.

The general outlines of the Harappan civilization will be familiar to readers of Sir Mortimer Wheeler's masterly summary *5000 Years of Pakistan* and Professor Piggott's fuller account in *Pre-historic India* (Pelican). It would be pointless to repeat what they have said with greater eloquence and fuller knowledge of the country and its remains. But I should like to emphasize a few points.

The Harappan civilization extended uniformly over one thousand miles of country, an area four times as big as Babylonia and twice as big as Egypt where equally uniform cultures reigned about the same time. Piggott explains this remarkable uniformity of architecture, costume, art, pottery, cult, equipment and script in political terms. It would correspond to unification in a single empire with twin capitals, Mohenjo Daro and Harappa. The parallel uniformity of Egyptian civilization was demonstrably the counterpart of the unification of the Nile valley and delta under the Pharaonic monarchy. On the other hand, the equal uniformity of Sumerian culture in Mesopotamia was compatible with the political independence and jealous rivalry of a number of city states. Which analogy shall be applied to prehistoric Pakistan?

Wheeler has discovered both at Mohenjo Daro and at Harappa powerful citadels dominating both cities. His excavations did not go far enough to decide whether the citadel held the palace of a human ruler or the temple of a god. It is not, therefore, possible to decide whether cultural uniformity did denote political unification. Effective means of communication and transport alone can be unquestionably deduced from it. In fact the Seven Rivers were moving roads, and the popularity of model carts and carriages as toys proves how common such vehicles must have been at a time barely a thousand years after the invention of the wheel itself.

If the political framework of the civilization remains uncer-

tain, elements of the social structure can be recovered. After the first publication of the Harappa excavations the city plans themselves disclosed the contrast between a *bourgeoisie* of prosperous merchants and a proletariat of artisans and labourers. The former inhabited commodious two-storeyed houses of many apartments, including bathrooms; most had a private well and shops or magazines on the ground floor like the modern merchants' 'godowns'. In one case such a room was fitted up as a water-seller's stall. The workmen's quarters on the other hand consist of rows of two-roomed detached cottages, each in a small yard. But prior to Wheeler's excavations one looked in vain for the royal tombs or the temples that disclosed the concentration of capital in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Yet it could be deduced *a priori* that concentration of wealth was a prerequisite for the transformation of a barbarian village into a literate city. The citadels disclose that the social surplus was in fact concentrated in either the Egyptian or in the Mesopotamian manner. They enclose or dominate great granaries in which food, the indispensable primary form of capital wealth, was physically accumulated. To them was brought by carts and boats the produce of an extensive countryside and from them were supported the urban population that did not grow or catch its own food. We do not know how the peasant was induced to produce and hand over a surplus of food beyond the subsistence needs of his family, nor whether the product was paid out in wages to free workmen, as rations to *corvee* labourers or slaves, or on some other system.

Yet, whatever the exact relations of production, the Indus economy certainly worked. It maintained a large population and kept going a complex system of production that was the basis for an efflorescence of art at a relatively high level for at least five hundred years. For judging both by the many building periods and the depth of debris in the Indus cities and by the time range assigned to typical Harappan imports in Mesopotamia, it must have lasted about that time.

But the architecture and relics recovered at all levels are astonishingly uniform. Within the passage of even time thus represented, no significant progressive nor yet regressive changes can be observed in house plans, forms of tool, fashions in personal adornment, pot forms and decoration, plastic art, seals, script, nor yet in the techniques for their production.

This rather monotonous uniformity over a long period is, let us insist, really a tribute to the efficiency of the adaptation to the environment that the Harappan civilization had rapidly achieved. It need not change because it worked so well. At the same time it can be called stagnation and stagnation must in the end mean death. This stagnation cannot be attributed merely to isolation; the well attested commerce with Mesopotamia refutes that explanation. It is rather the nemesis of the concentration of wealth. Such is indeed essential for the expansion of any industrial system from the barbaric stage of subsistence agriculture to the civilized level of specialization and differentiation of function. But once this has been achieved such concentration, by restricting effective purchasing power to a tiny closed circle, limits the internal market and prevents a demand for popular consumption goods and the labour-saving devices that have been the mainspring of technological progress further west. Egypt, Mesopotamia and Rome exhibit the same contradiction, but less dramatically, for they were more exposed to attack and subsequent revival by less civilized peoples on their borders. Even in Pakistan collapse came in the end. The latest Harappan buildings on several sites exhibit obvious sign of impoverishment and decay: the architecture is slovenly, the houses are slummy, the town planning regulations, formerly strictly observed, seem to be ignored. And then illiterate barbarians from the west plundered the cities and squatted among the ruins. Some band among the destroyers is doubtless to be identified with the Vedic Aryans. But archæology alone cannot identify these as they have left no written documents to record their presence.

Though the Indus script is undeciphered, the whole character of the Harappan civilization implies that it was pre-Aryan; for instance, horse-drawn chariots are indissolubly connected with peoples of Indo-European speech in the Near East, but horses and war chariots are unrepresented in Harappan layers. Yet many of the fundamental achievements of the Harappan civilization survived the catastrophe and the ensuing Dark Age, and live on in the folk culture of modern Pakistan. The village carts of Sind are identical, even to wheel span, with those that rolled along the broad streets of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro. Village potters have preserved unchanged the technical traditions of building, embellishing and firing pots that were applied four thousand years ago, though they have varied shapes and patterns to suit the tastes of fresh customers. The same continuity could be illustrated by fashions of personal ornament and dress and by surviving pagan cults. All exemplify the magnitude of the Indus people's achievement in the Harappan Age.

The Harappan civilization was not brought ready made from outside and imposed on Pakistan. It was created in the Indus basin, in the environment to which it is so nicely adjusted. But it was not created out of nothing, and the raw materials from which it was built up are not native to Punjab or Sind. The prime prerequisite of any civilization, the 'Neolithic' economy of plant cultivation and stock breeding, could not have originated on the alluvial plains; for the wild grasses from which its wheats and barleys are derived and the wild ancestors of domestic sheep are natives of upland regions, most probably the Iranian plateau to the west. Metallurgy again could only be discovered in the hill countries where ores occur in nature. These and other elements must have been brought to the Indus valley from outside. But they were not introduced already harmoniously blended in a civilization.

No doubt many of the elements from which the Harappan civilization is built up are shared by the contemporary civiliza-

tions of Mesopotamia and Egypt. A long list of common elements could be drawn up, ranging from 'writing', 'wheeled vehicles' and the 'potter's wheel' to 'brick architecture', 'the metallurgy of copper and bronze' and 'mixed farming'. The words all denote bare abstractions. The signs of the Indus script are quite unlike Sumerian pictographs or Egyptian hieroglyphs; the construction of Harappan carts is peculiar to the Indus basin; the sizes of bricks are as different as the plans of the houses built therefrom. Even the simplest tools wrought by the Harappan copper smiths can be distinguished at a glance from those produced by their fellows in Elam, Mesopotamia, Egypt or Greece. No doubt these abstract terms really denote a diffusion of ideas, inventions and discoveries and of the material means of their realization through the Middle and Near East. In some cases it may be arguable that the Tigris-Euphrates valley can claim priority over the Indus basin. For instance, a good case can be made out on general theoretical grounds for thinking that the wheel was invented and applied to the mass production of pots and to transport in Sumer about 3500 B.C. Thence it would have been diffused to Iran and so at length to Pakistan. On the other hand, McCown would accord priority to Iran and a centre on that plateau might accord better with the distribution of the first wheel-made pots and wheeled vehicles. But priority in invention is a chronological question. We possess a reliable relative chronology, i.e., a sequence of culture-periods for Mesopotamia, and others, quite independent and rather less precise, for parts of western Iran. But no regular interchange of manufactures distinctive of culture-periods yet permits firm and precise synchronisms between any two regional sequences. McCown's scheme, according priority to Iran, relies on agreements in the patterns of locally made pots or similarities between locally made pins and seals. But such parallels are rather ambiguous. There may be a great time lag between the creation of a device in one region and its adoption in another, and

it may likewise enjoy popularity in the one much longer than in the other. As a result very divergent chronologies have been proposed for Iran.

The same sort of ambiguities apply to the origin and diffusion of intelligent metallurgy. Once more the social and economic conditions for the establishment of an organized metal industry existed earlier in Sumer than anywhere else, and this circumstance has been used as an argument for a Mesopotamian origin of intelligent metallurgy (i.e., as contrasted with the use of native copper as a superior sort of stone) and in particular of alloying copper with tin to make bronze. McCown's chronology for Iran, on the other hand, assigns priority in this domain too to the plateau. Now the 'Sumerian' copper smiths very early devised some very distinctive and practical types of tools and weapons, in particular the shaft-hole axe. Now this device was not used in Pakistan in the Harappan phase, but was introduced to the Indus Valley by the barbarian invaders. In other words, the Harappans, like the Egyptians and most Bronze Age Europeans, stuck their axe-heads into the split shaft instead of fitting the shaft through a hole in the head as we do with iron axes to-day. Hence, if the metallurgy of bronze had been diffused eastward from Sumer, the process of diffusion must surely have started before the Sumerians invented the shaft-hole axe, i.e., not much after 4000 B.C. It is, therefore, perhaps more likely that the fundamental discovery was made on the plateau and subsequently diffused both to the West and to the East.

The same sort of arguments will apply even to the Neolithic revolution—the beginning of farming—itself. If then the cultural elements enumerated above reached the banks of the Indus from the West, that does not mean they started on the Tigris; indeed the starting point must not be placed too far west. Because the pre-historic deposits of Mesopotamia are very deep and very well known and culminate in a precocious literate civilization with historical dates, we almost inevitably

tend to imagine the culture sequence they denote started earlier than the village sites of Iran which is less well explored and remained illiterate very much longer. For the same sort of reasons and their greater proximity to the first sources of written history, the sites in the western end of the Iranian plateau are liable to be thought older than those on its eastern margin in Baluchistan, which have scarcely been explored at all. But there is as yet no evidence to justify this prejudice. Baluchistan lies within the zone where the ancestors of the plants and animals on which the later civilizations of the Near and Middle East and Europe are based, grew wild. Anywhere within, the Neolithic Revolution could arise. Now the earliest expressions of that revolution are the pre-pottery levels of Jericho and Jarmo in Kurdistan. But to-day we know a pre-pottery neolithic also from Pakistan, from Kile Ghul Mohammad near Quetta! Again later on we have indications of neolithic culture in the Zhob valley whose domestic stock included specifically eastern zebu cattle (*Bos indicus*).

Such observations tend to allow the cradle of Neolithic farming to be shifted or rather extended towards the borders of Pakistan. The same may turn out to be true of some of the later elements that eventually were blended in the Indus valley into such a vital organism as the Harappan civilization. At present the process of blending the stages in building up the Harappan civilization cannot be traced on the spot. Beneath the urban Harappan levels at Harappa and Amri are remains of simpler villages. The pottery from them suggests relations with the Zhob Valley in the first case, and with the Nal Valley at Amri. But it is already wheel-made in each case and that implies already an advanced stage of culture allowing an aggregation of population into large villages.

# 3

# PAKISTAN FOUR THOUSAND YEARS AGO

## SIR MORTIMER WHEELER

PAKISTAN is a new Islamic State but is nevertheless, like its older neighbours, a product of historical processes of which Islam itself is only the most recent and emphatic. Of its two component parts, separated by several hundred miles of India, the western and larger can claim an ancestral unity rivalled only by that of Egypt. That unity was essentially the work of man but was set within a framework defined by nature: with the Arabian Sea on the south-west, now dominated by the port and capital of Karachi, the Baluchistan and Himalayan mountains in the west and north, and the Indian Desert in the south-east. The axis of this vast area—a thousand miles from end to end—is the mighty river Indus and its tributaries which, with the aid of artifice, fertilize great tracts of good alluvial soil. Within this valley and along the coastal plains which flank its lower reaches, there flourished more than four thousand years ago, under climatic conditions moister and kindlier than those which prevail to-day, one of the earliest civilizations of the world.

It was a civilization in the true sense, based upon highly organized and wealthy cities, of which two are outstanding. These are at Harappa in the Punjab, and Mohenjo Daro or the 'Mound of the Dead', four hundred miles away in Sind, both originally riverside urban settlements some three miles in circumference. To-day, after many years of excavation,

Mohenjo Daro is one of the most spectacular ancient cities of the world. Whether it was the undisputed capital of an Indus Empire, or whether it shared its leadership with Harappa, it was certainly a metropolis of the first order. Let us, with an imagination controlled by the results of archæological excavation, visit it in its prime, two or three centuries prior to 2000 B.C., long before time the Indus floods had bitten into its derelict streets and houses.

Instead of approaching the city, as we do to-day, amidst sand and dusty tamarisk-bushes, we may suppose that we are passing through irrigated fields which in their season bear crops of wheat and barley, sesamum and field-peas, and a species of *rai*. Even a cotton plantation may lend variety to the busy scene; at any rate, cotton is certainly known to the Indus citizens. As we draw near to the suburbs, we pass the cemetery where slight oblong mounds, ranged north and south like those of Muslim cemeteries, indicate the resting place of the city forefathers. Beside and beyond them, smoking kilns begin to meet the eye, some for the baking of pottery, others for firing the millions of baked bricks used in the construction and reconstruction of the city's buildings and defences. And so we come at last to the great city itself, with its close-set houses and teeming streets.

We find that the city falls into two somewhat distinct parts, a lower and an upper. The latter, towards the western outskirts, is an oblong mound, four hundred yards from north to south and two hundred yards from east to west, and massively fortified. If for the present purpose we transfer to Mohenjo Daro the better-known details of the equivalent mound at Harappa, we shall see that the fortifications of this citadel—for thus it may be described—stand upon a bank or *bund* designed to protect the base of the defences from the floods which we know to have broken through occasionally into the town. Merchants from the distant city of Ur in Mesopotamia could tell us that their own city-walls stood in part upon a similar

protective foundation. On the Harappa-Mohenjo Daro *bund* rises a thick wall of mud-brick, forty feet wide but tapering upwards to a height of thirty or forty feet, and faced on the outside by a skin of baked brick to protect it from the monsoon rains. At intervals along it, rectangular towers project, and the corners in particular are heavily reinforced in this manner. In the northern end the walls turn inward to flank a long approach up into the interior and (at Harappa, at any rate) other gates on the western side give access to external terraces designed for ceremonial.

Within the walls, the building-level of the citadel is raised thirty feet above the plain by an artificial platform or infilling of earth and mud-brick; and on this platform, amongst buildings of a more normal sort, stands a series of remarkable structures which we assume to be connected with the civic administration—whether secular or religious or both. One of these buildings contains a well-built tank which probably serves a ritual function. Another, with solid walls and cloistered court, is seemingly the residence of a high official, possibly the high priest himself, or perhaps rather a college of priests. Yet another is a large pillared hall, designed obviously for ceremony or conference. It is clear enough that this assemblage of unique and monumental structures, frowning from its pedestal upon the town below, represents the stern, masterful rule of which the 'lower city' also constantly reminds us.

Before descending from the citadel, however, let us climb upon the eastern battlements and survey the lower city from above. At our feet, we see the houses and shops stretching for a mile towards the broad Indus, where another *bund* seeks to ward off the river that at the same time serves the city and threatens it. From beneath the two ends of the citadel, parallel streets, some thirty feet broad, stretch away from us and are crossed by other straight streets which divide the town-plan into great oblong blocks, each four hundred yards in length and two hundred or three hundred yards in width. Within

these blocks, purposeful lanes subdivided the groups of buildings and maintain the general rectangularity of the plan. It is clear that the city is no chance-growth. It is drilled and regimented by a civic architect whose will is law.

Even from where we stand, we can see that the streets are lined with a remarkable system of brick-covered drains. In the nearer distance one of these is being cleaned out by a uniformed municipal sanitary squad, at a point where a manhole has been built for the purpose. (Two thousand years later, archæologists will find the heap of debris still lying beside the manhole.) But it is the 'hour of cow-dust', when the children are driving in the humped cattle and the short-horns and the buffaloes from the countryside for the night, along streets which, though well-drained, are unpaved; and the dust from the herds and from the solid-wheeled 'Sindhi' carts and an occasional elephant that went amongst them rises high amongst the houses and obscures detail. We can just see that many of the houses are of a normal oriental courtyard-plan, the rooms grouped round two or more sides of a court or light-well; and here and there we can catch a glimpse of a brick staircase leading up to a flat roof or an upper storey. For the rest, we must descend into the streets themselves.

There, if we come from some of the ancient cities of the West, we are at once struck with the uniformity and monotony of the street-architecture, with the absence of monumental sculpture or other divertisement. At the best, the severe brick walls are coated with mud plaster. In the main streets there are few doors and fewer windows; most of the houses are entered from the side-lanes, where pie-dogs lurk and chase occasional cats, and children play with marbles and with little terracotta carts and dolls. Through the doors of some of the better houses a glimpse can be obtained of furniture enlivened by inlay of shell or green-blue faience, but of no great elaboration. Here and there a chute in an outside wall discharges waste and sewage into a brick-built soil-tank or into a large jar, pending

the attentions of the busy sanitary squad. Meanwhile, at the shop besides us, another municipal squad—the Inspectors of Weights and Measures—is rigorously checking the shop-keeper's cubic stone weights against a standard set. All is orderly and regulated. At the same time, all is a trifle dull, a trifle lacking in the stimulus of individuality. The almost unvarying character of the city as a whole from century to century is reflected in this absence or suppression of personality in its details from street to street.

This sense of regimentation reaches its climax in a quarter where there are sixteen small, identical, two-roomed cottages for the housing of slaves or conscripts, reminding us of the coolie-quarter which lies between the citadel and the ancient river-bed at Harappa. There, again behind two rows of coolie-cottages, are serried lines of circular brick platforms for the pounding of grain in central mortars, and behind these in turn, significantly near to the river and its shipping, lie parallel lines of granaries upon a brick-faced pedestal. At both cities we seem to see, as in Mesopotamia, the secular arm of an administration strengthened and straitened by religious sanction; a civic discipline rigidly enforced by a king-god or his priesthood.

That being so, the more regrettable is it that in our tour of the city we have not found a single building which can with certainty be described as a temple. It may be that the dust has obscured, as to-day a much later Buddhist stupa obscures, the highest point of the citadel, where the chief temple might be expected. Nor can we make good the omission at Harappa, since there a still more recent obstruction (a cemetery) will baffle the archæologist. For the religion and ritual of these cities we must console ourselves with lesser relics. Thus terra-cotta figurines of women seem to show that a Mother-goddess played some part at least in domestic ritual, and there are suggestions of a form of phallus-worship. Seal-representations of a three-faced and horned male god squatting with legs

bent double and surrounded, on one seal, by an elephant, a tiger, a rhinoceros and a buffalo, suggest a forerunner of the Hindu Siva. There are also many indications on seals and pottery that trees, particularly the *pipal* or sacred fig tree, were worshipped, as widely as in India to-day. Animals, notably the bull, which is sometimes accompanied by a so-called 'sacred brazier' or manger, were apparently objects of veneration, and composite animals, such as one with a human face, an elephant's trunk, the forequarters of a bull and the hindquarters of a tiger, presumably represent a synthesis of animal-cults. Snakes may also have been worshipped, and here again many parallels may be found in modern India. Altogether it is likely that the religion of the Indus civilization anticipated certain of the non-Aryan elements in the Hinduism of a long-subsequent age.

But we have not yet left the busy street, with its seething population. The dress of the local citizens is notably scanty but, so far as it goes, ornamental. The women wear a short skirt held by a girdle which may be adorned with beads. Above the waist, the body is bare save for extensive necklaces which are usually of clay or stone beads but are sometimes of blue faience or green jadeite or even of gold. The most remarkable feature, however, is the fan-shaped headdress worn with grave, ceremonious mien by an occasional lady of rank and fashion. At the sides of the headdress are pannier-like cloth extensions, carefully stiffened and balanced and of grotesque aspect to the foreign eye. Of the men, less is to be said. The poorer classes are usually naked, the others may wear a loin-cloth, and a few, particularly the priests and high officials, are wrapped in embroidered cloaks. Many of them are bearded, but the seniors sometimes shave the upper lip in accordance with a hieratic fashion more at home in the neighbouring civilization of Sumer.

Let us peer at the passers-by more closely. We find that about half of them are of medium height and slender build,

with olive complexion, dark hair, long head and fine features. Similar men and women of this attractive appearance might be found in many places, from the western Mediterranean to southern Arabia and India. Amongst them are a few of smaller stature, dark, with curly black hair and pronounced lips, of an aspect recalling that of some of the 'aboriginals' of the Indian peninsula. An occasional passenger has a broad head with regular but rugged features. Of mixed type is a priest with beard and shaven lip and a woven fillet round his hair, whose advent is received with obsequiousness by all within range. And, striding amongst them in his Turkoman boots, is an almond-eyed Mongolian who came in this morning after a moonlight trek with a camel-caravan which has brought a mixed cargo of dried fruits and blue lapis lazuli and turquoise from Afghanistan and Iran. In brief, the human scene is as cosmopolitan as such scenes are wont to be.

One perennial feature of our surroundings continues to evade us: the language which many of these folk are speaking and which is indicated by clearly rendered but unintelligible characters upon goods in the shops and even on some of the pottery at the well. We nevertheless glance frequently at the seals and sealings bearing these unread characters, for they also bear vivid and beautifully engraved representations of animals —cattle of various kinds, tiger, rhinoceros, elephant, crocodile —and, as already remarked, the shapes of gods. Only ordinary mankind, it seems, is passed over as of no account. Once more, we find that the individual is of no great interest to this efficient but curiously detached society.

And so for many centuries these cities endured, scarcely varying from age to age, self-satisfied and completely isolated from their neighbours outside the Indus valley, save for a thin trickle of trade. Sameness, isolation, centralization are the abstract qualities of the Indus civilization. It was a civilization within an Iron Curtain, which preserved it marvellously intact

for a thousand years, more or less. Then, about 1500 B.C., something happened to it.

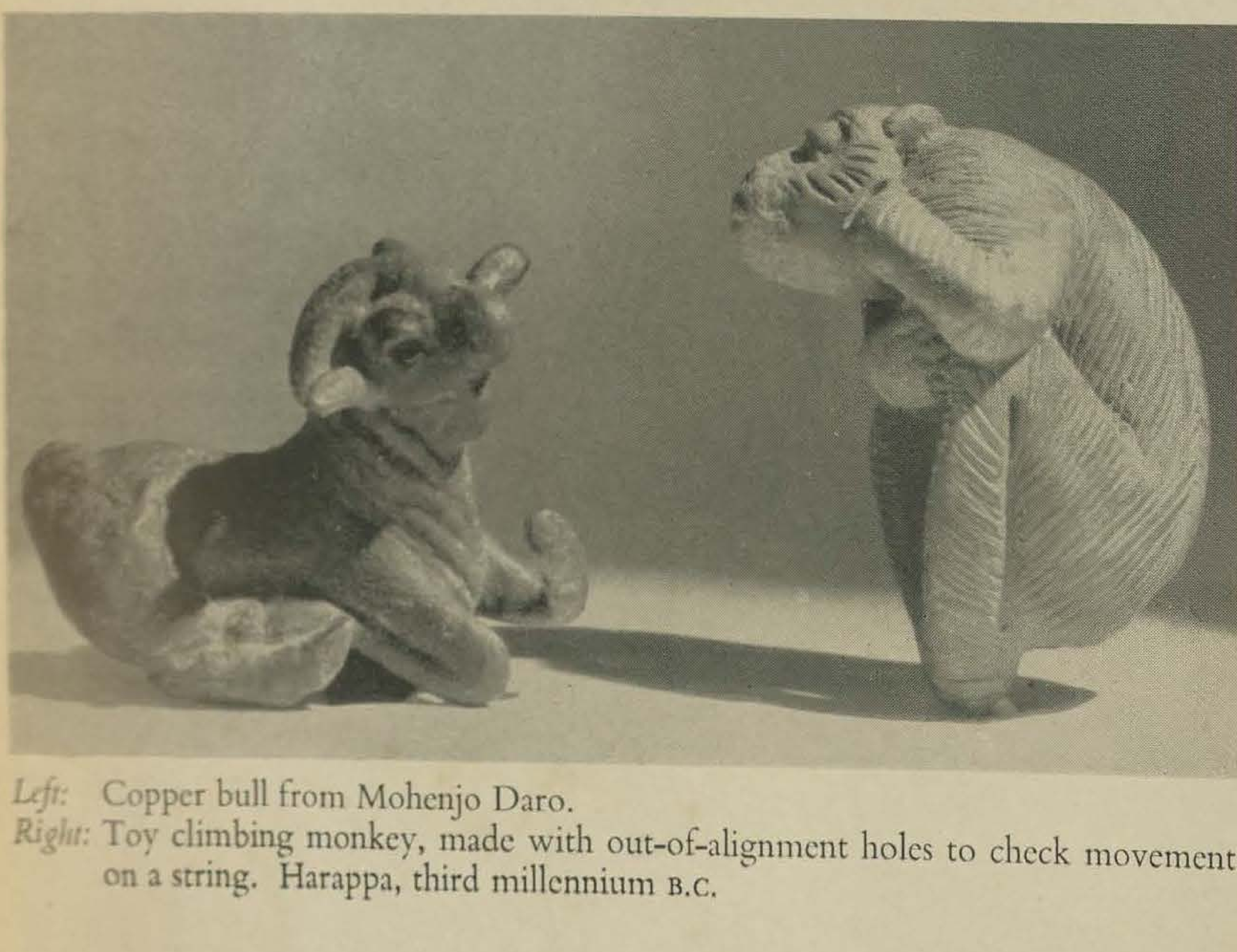
*We are once again on the eastern fortifications of the citadel of Mohenjo Daro. Before us lie the familiar straight streets, stretching far away towards the Indus. But otherwise the scene is a very different one from the peaceful evening homecoming which we witnessed before. Now volumes of smoke and flame are rising from several of the houses below us. Led by a gesticulating man in an outlandish chariot drawn by two small ponies which are stretched at a fast canter, a horde of howling swordsmen is rushing down one of the main streets. By the chariot-pole crouches the charioteer, and every now and then the swaying figure beside him fits an arrow to a short, stocky bow and discharges it into the panic-stricken groups of fleeing citizens. As we watch, a gang of desperadoes turns into one of the side-lanes where half a dozen wretched creatures, including a small child, have just emerged from a house and are seeking escape. In a moment their bodies are sprawling in the dust and their cries cease. A little further on, a rash refugee has returned for some treasured knick-knack, and he shares the same fate. At another spot a pathetic group of eight or nine figures, half of them children, is emerging heavily laden from the Quarter of the Ivory Workers. They are surrounded: their screams reach a brief crescendo and die away. Their treasures have been transferred to other hands, and the looters are thrusting upon their way. Elsewhere again, we look down on one of the public well-rooms, in which local house-folk were drawing water when death came to their city. For a time they have cowered beside the well as the screams and the shouting draw steadily nearer. Now they can bear the suspense no longer. Two of them are climbing the stairs, have reached the street, when the invading mob closes upon them. They drop, and are instantly trampled into the sand. A burly fellow with raised sword turns on to the well-house stairs and cuts down the cowering woman who is struggling up them. She falls backwards across the steps, and her companion, still beside the well, is struck down instantly. Laden with plunder, the ravening horde sweeps on.*



Bust of a bearded man, possibly a priest.
Mohenjo Daro, third millennium B.C.



Bronze statuette of a dancing girl found at Mohenjo Daro



*Left:* Copper bull from Mohenjo Daro.
*Right:* Toy climbing monkey, made with out-of-alignment holes to check movement on a string. Harappa, third millennium B.C.



Mohenjo Daro. View of a well, with drain beyond



Steatite seals from Mohenjo Daro

*A part of it is already streaming up the long stairway into the citadel on which we stand. It is high time for us to take flight into the future, through thirty-four centuries during which the poor bones of the massacred will lie there in the derelict streets and lanes until twentieth-century archæologists shall dig and find them where they, with their age-long civilization, perished within the hour.*

It remains to expand this story a little in the colder light of science and literature. Recent revisions make it clear that the Indus civilization was still living in the early centuries of the second millennium B.C. It was succeeded by a variety of (materially) inferior cultures, in some cases after a phase of violence. Into this picture it is difficult not to bring the evidence of the earliest literature of India, the Rig Veda, which is agreed to represent, from the Aryan point of view and in the vague way of a hieratic hymnal, the conditions of the invasion of the Punjab by the Aryans at a date which, on archæological and other grounds, is now commonly ascribed to the fifteenth century B.C. The Vedic hymns make it clear that the mobile, city-less invaders differed at every point from the long-static citizens whom they invaded. The term used for the cities of the aborigines means a 'fort' or 'stronghold'. Indra, the Aryan war-god, is called the 'fort-destroyer'. He shatters a hundred 'ancient castles' of the aboriginal leader. He 'rends forts as age consumes a garment'.

Where are—or were—these native citadels? It has in the past been supposed that they were mythical or, at the best, mere palisaded refuges. But, since the discovery of fortifications at Harappa and Mohenjo Daro in 1944, we know that at least the administrative nucleus of these great cities was strongly fortified. We know too that lesser sites of the same civilization could boast defensive walls of stone, stone-and-mud, or brick. The general showing, then, is that of a highly evolved 'aboriginal' civilization of essentially non-Aryan type, now known to have employed massive fortifications, and known also to

have dominated the river-system of Pakistan at a time not distant from the likely period of the earlier Aryan invasions of that region. What destroyed this firmly settled civilization? Climatic, economic, political deterioration may have weakened it, but its ultimate extinction is more likely to have been completed by deliberate and large-scale destruction. On circumstantial evidence, Indra and his Aryans stand accused. It is now generally accepted that the Indus cities were in fact those referred to in the Rig Veda, and that they were destroyed by Aryan invaders in or about the fifteenth century B.C.

# 4

# PAKISTAN AND WESTERN ASIA

## NORMAN BROWN

WESTERN Pakistan is a region which has been conspicuously important in the development of civilization. This is not merely because the Indus Valley and the adjacent areas west of it were the seats of early civilizations, and rank in that respect only a little later than ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. Doubtless everyone is aware of the numerous archæological sites of the third millennium B.C. there, the chief of which were first publicly reported in 1924 no more than thirty years ago. The importance also lies in the fact that in the area of Western Pakistan cultural blending, with the development of new forms of civilization, has been in progress throughout the entire period of its recorded history and doubtless in even earlier periods for which we lack historical documents but have archæological data of other sorts. The effects of this cultural blending have been felt not only in what is now Western Pakistan but throughout the entire Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. It is the purpose of this article to deal with this aspect of Western Pakistan's pre-history and history, making reference to the various periods in which cultures have met there.

The basis of the phenomenon has been the constantly recurring intrusion into the area of new forces of civilization from the west and north-west. There they would meet a civilization compounded of other forces which had entered previously from the same direction and the civilization which had been evolving in the main portion of the sub-continent. A fact of geography is influential in this connection. The Indo-Pakistan sub-

continent is well protected at almost all points by natural barriers of mountain, desert, jungle, marsh, or sea. Only the north-western and western sides, in spite of notable mountain and desert protection, have passes penetrable by large bodies of men. These have left it vulnerable to a strong power, and they have been pierced, at least in historic times, by a number of invasions which have seriously affected the sub-continent's life.

Further, the traffic has generally been one-way. The passes have served for admitting elements of civilization to the sub-continent much more than for exporting it. West of the passes lay regions of low economic resources and development, which offered no attraction to the people of the sub-continent. But to the people of the western regions, the sub-continent was a perpetual lure. Hence through the passes came intrusions of many sorts, some ethnic, some for military conquest and rule, some for no more than plunder. The most important were the ethnic. Through the passes have come peoples from Central Asia urged on by hunger or by the pressure of other hungry and stronger peoples at their rear. Such movements might progress slowly since the people were bringing their herds with them. The greatest would eventually alter the whole nature of the culture, becoming the dominant elements in the blend, imposing their languages or their theology upon their predecessors. Sometimes an invasion would be checked shortly after debouching from the Afghanistan mountains upon the plains of the Punjab; sometimes it had a power which carried it to the east, the centre, and the south of the sub-continent, perhaps in a slow advance that continued for centuries or even millennia.

When an invasion came through the Khyber or nearby passes at the top of the north-western frontier—or less seldom, the passes lower down that frontier—it occupied the first arable land below the mountains. Usually this was the upper part of the Indus plain. This area in itself did not satisfy most invaders; they wanted more. The directions of further progress were fairly well standardized. Invaders who turned south into

Sind found land of only mediocre arability, and, what was worse, they might be brought to a dead end against the sea or against the great Indian Desert on their left. In a few cases they seem to have crossed from lower Sind to Cutch, and from there to eastern Rajputana and Gujarat. Much more attractive was the eastward course from the Punjab, following the Northern Indian plain, which extends for a thousand miles between the Himalayan range on the north and the hills of Central India on the south, varying in width from one hundred to two hundred miles, and probably always, as to-day, the sub-continent's most important agricultural region.

An invading element entering the north-west might be superimposed upon a predecessor, which was still advancing towards the east or the south. This phenomenon gives civilization in the sub-continent its most basic feature, which is cultural overlap. This is least prevalent in the extreme south. It is most apparent in the north, where there exists, especially in Uttar Pradesh (formerly known as the United Provinces), the greatest amount of cultural mixture. It is less striking to-day in the north-west, now constituting Western Pakistan, where the latest invading culture, which is the Islamic, has been in possession long enough to achieve, through combined military domination, demographic operation, and cultural blending, a notable degree of homogeneity.

The result of the process for the north-west has been that throughout pre-history it has tended to face two ways culturally at once. When a new group entered, it was closer to its outside congeners than to elements already existing in the sub-continent. Yet, after entering, it was partly isolated by the facts of topography from those same congeners. The north-west, therefore, has always had double cultural sympathies, in part with the region east of it, in part with some region to the west or north. Let us see how this has worked during the past four thousand or more years, starting with the earliest period for which we have records of civilization.

We cannot say who were the earliest inhabitants of the sub-continent; we do not know what peoples or people, if any, living there to-day, are the descendants of the group which first owned civilization there. Our first archæological data for India comes from sites in the Indus Valley which we consider were occupied during a period from early in the third millennium to about the sixteenth century B.C. It belongs to a number of separate cultures, of which the most widespread, named after the sites where they were first discovered, are the 'Amri' or 'Amri-Nal', which is probably the oldest, the 'Harappa', which was the most important, the 'Jhukar', which was the last. No one of these closely parallels any culture outside the sub-continent. Nor have we knowledge of corresponding or even contemporary cultures elsewhere within it, not even in the Ganges Valley, which is the place where one might be expected to have existed and where archæologists still do not despair of discovering one. Nevertheless partial parallels exist, which are suggestive.

The most important criterion for all is pottery, though the Harappa and the Jhukar also have other critical types of material. The Amri culture is known so far only in Sind and Baluchistan. Its painted pottery has been tentatively associated with Obeid ware in Iran of the fourth or third millennia B.C. It has no known contemporary or later parallels in India. The inference would be that this culture and the people owning it entered the Indus Valley from the west. It may have come by the passes of the extreme north-west and filtered southward, though so far we cannot support that theory by examples of Amri ware in the Punjab. Or it may have entered the Indus Valley through the Baluchistan passes. We clearly know too little about the Amri culture and its relations to speak with any degree of assurance.

For the Harappa culture, which is by far the most widely represented of all and endured by far the longest time, we have much better data. It had commerce with the West. There are

period of mixed Iranian and later Indian affinities, followed by another short period of relatively close Iranian connection.

In our present state of knowledge, we may regard the period of the Indus Valley cultures as the first epoch in the history of civilization in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. The second epoch is again one in which the north-west figures basically. This is the period when the Aryans entered through the passes of the north-west, at a time assumed to be about 1500–1200 B.C., and possessed the culture of the Rig Veda, which is the first and most important book of the early Indo-Aryans and was probably compiled by 1000 B.C. The book is religious in purpose and has very little historical information, yet it and the closely related Yajur with parts of some works composed a little later, tell us all that we know about the Indo-Aryans at that time. We have no material remains of these Aryans such as cities, burials, art, crafts.

Incomplete as the data are, we can still establish certain general and suggestive facts. First, the area which the Aryans of the Rig Veda held consisted primarily of the Punjab; it seems likely also to have included a part of Afghanistan to the west; it may have extended a short distance in the east beyond the Punjab into the Doab of the Ganges and the Jumna. Second, these Indo-Aryans regarded themselves as culturally different from, and of course automatically by their own definition superior to, the people whom they found in the land. The latter were enemies against whom the Aryans fought with the aid of Indra, the king of their pantheon and their patron in war. They disliked the ways of the non-Aryans, applied derogatory epithets to them, condemned their religious practices, denominated them sorcerers and adherents of the demons, and when they received any in their society, whether as captives or otherwise, made them serve without the privileges of citizenship and religion which they themselves enjoyed, an attitude generally considered to be one of the elements contributing to the formation of the caste system. Thirdly,

the Aryans brought in a language unrelated to any already existing in the sub-continent. It belonged to the Indo-European language family, while the families already there were the Dravidian, now represented in southern India, and probably the Munda, now scattered in various parts of western Bengal, Bihar, and the Central Provinces. The result was linguistic clash, leading in varying measure, in different regions, to linguistic blending. As the Aryans have continued to live in the sub-continent, and have fused with the non-Aryans, the conflict of languages followed by blending, with the Aryan element being the dominant, has continued.

The evidence of the Rig Veda shows that during the centuries when the Aryans were occupying the Punjab and composing the hymns of the Rig Veda, the north-west part of the sub-continent was culturally separate from the rest of India.

The closest cultural relations of the Indo-Aryans at that period were with the Iranians, whose language and sacred texts are preserved in the various works known as the Avesta, in inscriptions in Old Persian, and in some other scattered documents. So great is the amount of material common to the Rig Vedic Aryans and the Iranians that the books of the two peoples show common geographic names as well as deities and ideas. The Aryans took into the sub-continent names of streams which they had known before in Afghanistan and Iran, much as British settlers brought and used in America such names as Thames or Severn or Avon. In the Rig Vedic, or Early Aryan, period of civilization in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, the north-west was again marked off from the rest of India. Aryanism, which in later historic times became the orthodox definition of native Indian civilization, was, until some time after the beginning of the first millennium B.C., a foreign culture in the country.

Following the Vedic period, Aryan civilization and non-Aryan blended in the valley of the Ganges, especially about the sixth century B.C., to produce characteristic native Indian civili-

zation, marked by distinctive features of social organization, legal institutions, religious practice and philosophical speculation, and art forms. This was all enshrined in Aryan languages.

During this latter period, that is, in the sixth century B.C., we pass from pre-history in the sub-continent to one for which historical records exist. For that century we have a small amount of data concerning Magadha, in eastern India, where the founders of Buddhism and Jainism preached, and for some nearby regions.

In that century also we have mention of the north-west in the accounts and inscriptions of the Achæmenian kings of Persia. These monarchs transgressed the line of mountains and highlands that lie west of the river Indus and won themselves territories in the Indus plain. Cyrus, founder of the dynasty, who reigned from 558–529 B.C., cannot definitely be shown to have reached the Indus, though he conquered Afghanistan and part of Baluchistan. His successor, Cambyses, seems unlikely to have extended the Persian Empire to the east. But Darius I, who reigned 521–486 B.C., affirms in his inscriptions at Persepolis and Naksh-i-Rustam that he conquered the territories of the Indus Valley. Herodotus adds further information concerning the Persian occupation, the enormous amount of tribute paid by the Indian satrapies, and other items. It seems that Darius I held the entire course of the Indus from the Upper Punjab to the Arabian Sea and some land to the east of the river—how far east is not known, but most authorities seem to think that he had the sections of Sind west of the Rajputana Desert and had penetrated into the Punjab beyond the Indus. His successor, Xerxes 486–461, had Indian soldiers among his forces along with troops from regions in Afghanistan and Baluchistan. It seems that Persia continued to hold territory in India beside the river Indus through the period of decadence of Achæmenian rule and down to the defeat of Darius III in 330 and the invasion of the Punjab by Alexander.

So scanty is our information about the north-west during

Achæmenian times that we can say almost nothing about the cultural effects of the Persian domination. How close the Indo-Aryans were to their brothers the Iranians in Cyrus' time we have no record. Hints in Avestan literature tell us little. Indian literature, except for controversial Vedic passages, is silent. By deduction many conclusions have been drawn—few of them can be demonstrated to be true. Some of the most impressive seem to be those concerning the palace architecture, sculptural techniques of official pillars, and practice of carving edicts on rocks under the emperor Asoka (*c.* 274–237 B.C.) in post-Achæmenian times. These were evidently modelled upon Persian prototypes, and we may assume, therefore, that in the kingdom of Magadha in eastern India, which had been gaining prestige since the sixth century B.C., the fame of the great Achæmenian rulers to the west was well established and the institutions of Persia were known and counted worthy of imitation. Similarly, Kharosthi, one of the two Indian scripts which appear in the third century B.C., in India's first preserved inscriptions, very likely entered India from Iran for commercial uses at that time. But how much the upper north-west retained of its old Vedic character and how much it took from the Iranians of Achæmenian times we are in no position to say. The degree to which it felt itself allied to the West, that is to Afghanistan and Persia, as well as the degree to which it felt itself either assimilated to, or different from, eastern India we also have no means of ascertaining. The one generalization we can make is that politically the north-west was again separate from central, northern, and eastern India. The fact seems clearly to have facilitated the invasion of Alexander and to have contributed to the cultural divergence between the north-west and the rest of the sub-continent in the centuries after his time.

Alexander's invasion of the Punjab (327/26–325) is sometimes mentioned as marking the beginning of Greek influence upon the sub-continent. Though this statement is in a sense true, it is probably more accurate to say that because the

Achæmenian empire included the north-west and Alexander took it over in conquering that empire, it was natural that Hellenism, on developing in that empire after Alexander's time, should enter the north-west. The history of the area after Alexander's time is for many centuries tangled and confused. The old Persian satrapies were at first part of the kingdom of Alexander's successor, the general Seleucos Nicator. But Chandragupta (321–297 B.C.), the founder of the Maurya dynasty at Pataliputra in eastern India, appears to have got most of the area from the Greek, but how much by war and how much by diplomacy is not certain.

His grandson, the celebrated Asoka (probably ruled 274–247 B.C.), had his border in Afghanistan, though like the British in our own times his actual 'dominions' did not extend so far, possibly not farther than the present western edge of the Punjab, and he merely exercised influence without full rule over 'the border peoples' beyond. The Maurya Empire appears to have broken up some time around the year 200 B.C., and a number of kingdoms more or less Greek in character existed in Afghanistan and the north-west, in their turn followed by kingdoms ruled by peoples from Central Asia, of whom the most notable were the Sakas and the Kusanas. Most of these came through the passes of the extreme north-west, but at least one group of Sakas came from Seistan to Baluchistan and into lower Sind, then across Cutch and into Rajputana.

During much of this time, the north-west had political affiliations with Central Asia and with Iran. The political status was partly paralleled by the cultural. There were cultural elements introduced from Central Asia, as by the Kusanas, but the great intrusive force was the Hellenistic. The Indo-Greek dynasties used Greek as well as Indian languages in their courts, and kings struck their coins in both. Art was hellenized; the temples had classical Greek and Roman characteristics which had been transmuted into Persian forms, and the sculpture was marked with Greek motifs and techniques, and

adopted Greek iconographic types, though the subject matter was Buddhist. Meanwhile farther east India had her own types of sculpture.

The expansion, then contraction, and final withering of Hellenism in India should probably not be detailed here. Some elements of Hellenism were assimilated by the native Indian culture. These were perhaps a few in mathematics, medicine, and especially astrology, possibly also some in literature and philosophy. When the Huns in the fifth century A.D. overran the Punjab, destroying as they conquered, Hellenism collapsed in the sub-continent for good. The period of Hellenism, lasting 600 or 700 years, terminated about A.D. 500 and native Indian culture rolled back again over at least part of the north-west.

Politically during the time when Hellenism in India was decaying and in the centuries afterward, the north-west remained separate from northern and central India. The Gupta Empire, which was at its height in the middle of the fourth century A.D., and the empire of Harsha in the middle of the seventh century A.D., barely reached into the Punjab and included none of Sind.

In the century immediately after Harsha, that is, in the eighth century, new elements from the West began to claim the north-western part of India.

The invasion was military and was by Muslims. On the cultural side it was strongly religio-centric, as probably had been the Aryan invasion two thousand years before. It was unlike the Hellenistic, which never contended with the native Indian on religion or the social institutions sanctioned by religion, but readily adopted Buddhism. Islam was brought by Arabs from lower Mesopotamia to Sind at the beginning of the eighth century and established itself there firmly, never since to be dislodged. About three centuries later it entered the upper part of the north-west from Afghanistan, brought by Afghans and Turks. The first great incursions came from Ghazni starting at about the beginning of the eleventh century.

These were raids rather than settlements. In the latter half of the twelfth century a further series of conquests began, this time based on Ghor in Afghanistan. By 1161–1186 Islam had won Lahore in the Central Punjab; by 1193 it had swept across north India as far as Benares; by 1199 it had invaded Bihar; and in 1202 it took the western part of Bengal. Further Muslim conquests in succeeding centuries extended to almost every corner of India. The zenith of Muslim power and cultural magnificence was under the Mogul dynasty from the fifteenth to the early eighteenth century.

Though Muslim power and with it Islamic culture were carried throughout the sub-continent, its strength varied widely in different regions. In some places, notably south India, the Muslim element remained minor, occasionally negligible. In some others, such as the present Uttar Pradesh, the division of the population was more nearly equal. In still other places there was a heavy preponderance in favour of the Muslims. One of these last was the north-west, where Islam had entered. There not only was the rulership Muslim, the people too almost all became Muslim as well. Once again, the north-west had become marked off from the rest of the sub-continent, with a characteristic cultural differentiation.

Islamic civilization came into the sub-continent with the accumulated tradition of all Near Eastern cultures. It had behind it the cosmopolitanism that flourished under the Caliphate and united the western Muslim world starting with Persia and stretching across the Near East, Asia Minor, and North Africa until it reached Spain. It had all the art and literature of Persia at its command. It was the heritor and developer of Greek astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. It had its own legal institutions and produced some of India's greatest governmental administrators, such as the Mogul emperor Akbar. Noble and beautiful buildings adorned its cities. Intensely and uncompromisingly monotheistic it was, but within that limitation it fostered philosophy. In the sub-

continent it promoted its own social democracy, which contrasted with the Hindu caste system; it developed new schools of thought, and produced an extensive and often scintillating literature. At a Muslim court was cultivated the celebrated Mogul school of painting. The Muslims cherished their own music, which has come to dominate much of northern and north-western India. From the meeting of cultures came some synthesis, as in costume and in the language Urdu, the lingua franca of the northern part of the sub-continent, which owes much of its vocabulary to Persian and Arabic, though all the syntax is indigenous.

Muslim power in India developed a characteristic type of civilization. Though the Hindu and Muslim cultures have had considerable effect upon each other, the process of blending, such as has been effected of Aryan with non-Aryan in northern India, is still relatively little advanced.

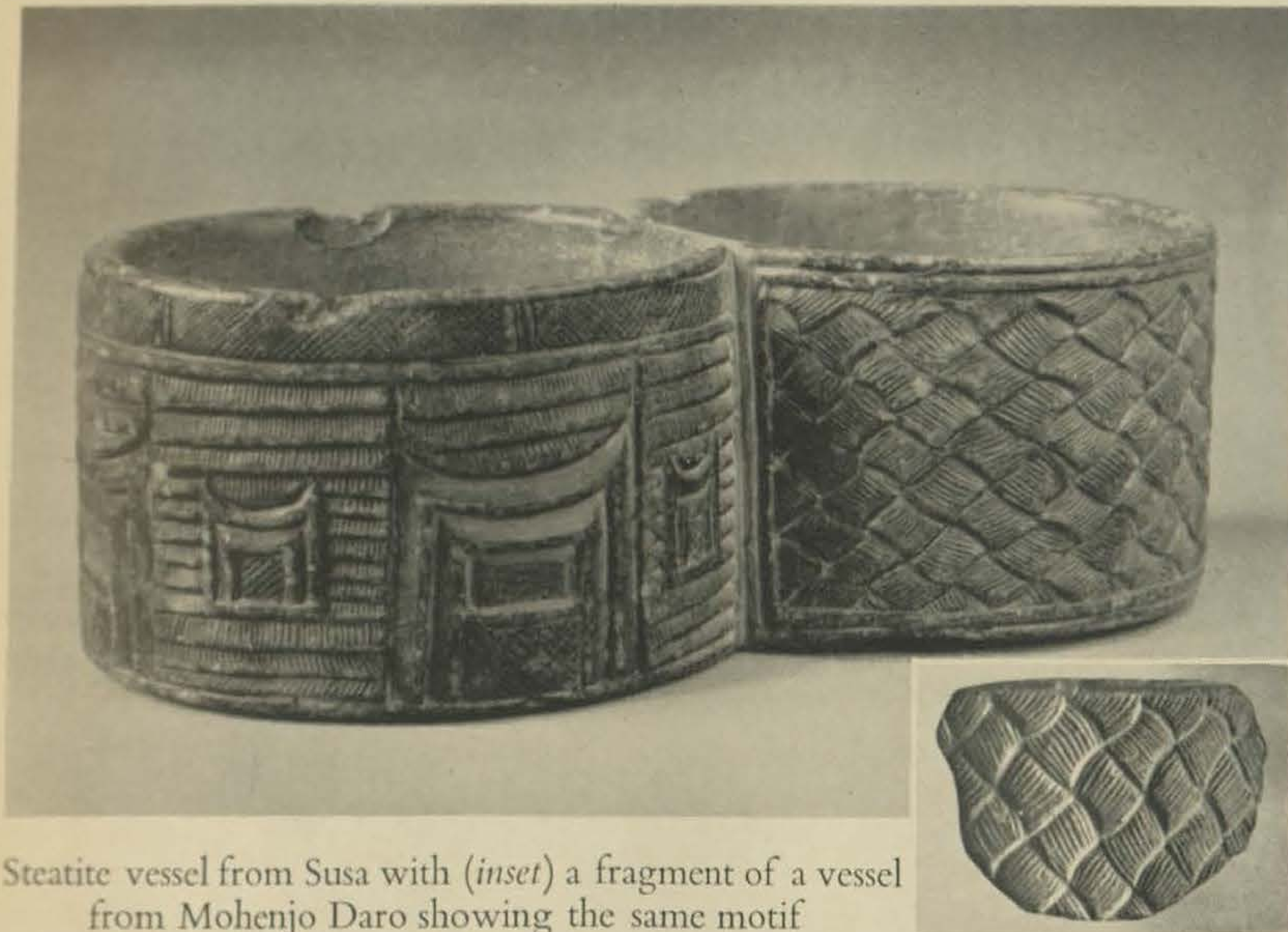
Periods during two thousand five hundred years of history when the Punjab, which is the most important section of the north-west, has been culturally assimilated to the rest of the sub-continent, or even to north India, are few if any at all. The centuries most likely to deserve the characterization seem to be the sixth to the twelfth A.D. The centuries in which the Punjab and any substantial part of north India have been politically united are also few. They are as follows: perhaps a part of the fourth and third centuries B.C. under the great Mauryas; possibly a brief period under the Indo-Greek Buddhist king Menander in the second century B.C., and another brief period under the Kusanas in the first or second century A.D. (depending upon dating); a formal association under the Muslim kingdom of Delhi from the last quarter of the twelfth century, which however, frequently broke down in practice; a real association under the great Moguls during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; finally, another century of close political association under the British, who after annexing Sind in 1843 took the Punjab in 1846.

To-day Pakistan as a Muslim nation looks westward to the lands where Islam was born and became great. Western Pakistan especially illustrates the same phenomenon of association with Western regions which it has exhibited in the past. It feels itself culturally akin to those areas outside the subcontinent rather than to the areas east of it; though these are geographically close to it and economically its natural partners. It is trying to supplement the spiritual connections with the West with transmontane political and economic intercourse.

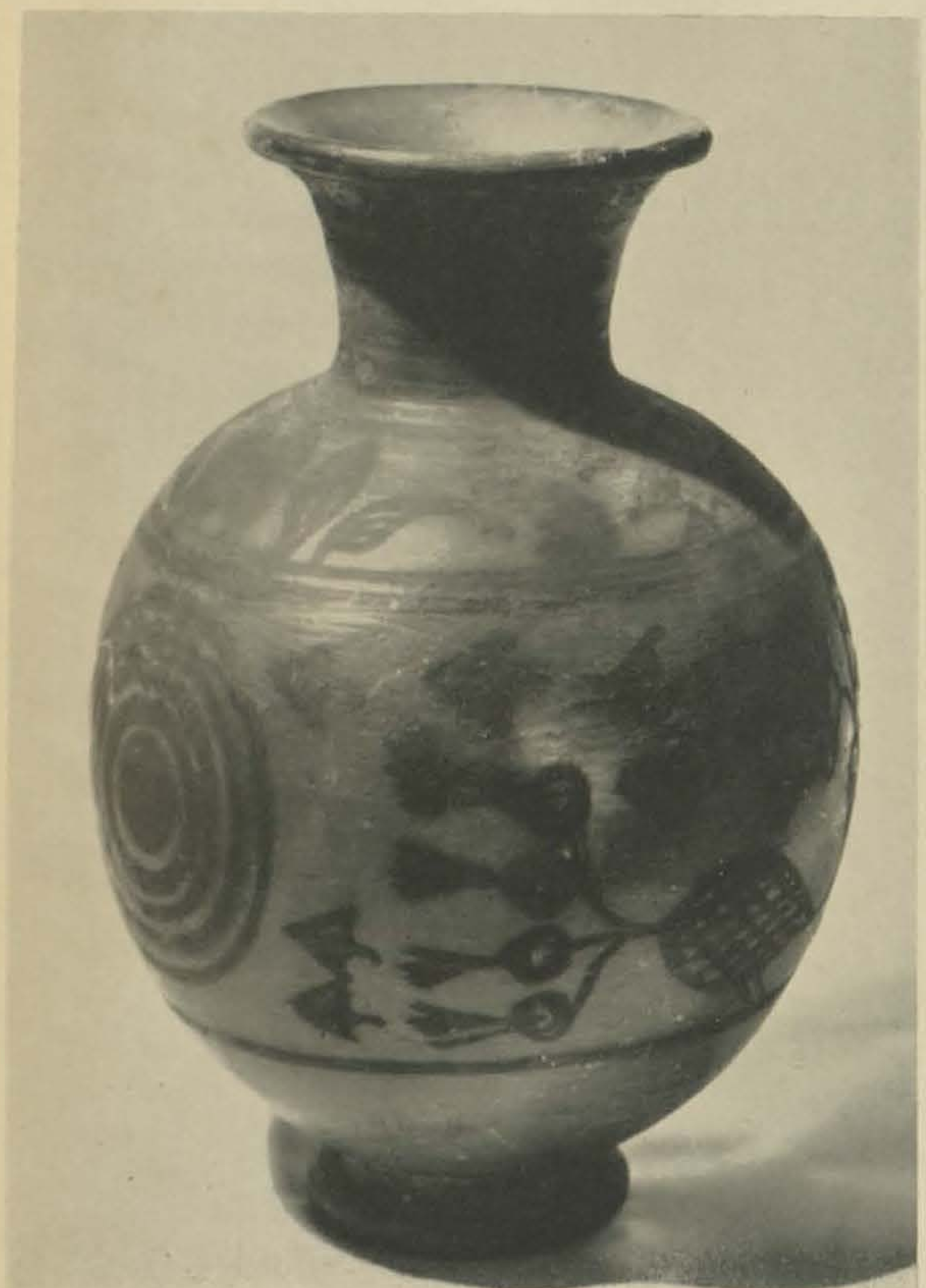
This desire appears in Pakistan's foreign policy, of which a major feature is association with other Islamic nations. It has sided with the Arab nations on the question of Israel. It has aimed generally to cultivate pan-Islamic friendship.

As Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Zafrulla Khan claimed of his country (18 August, 1951), "It has served actively . . . in the cause of independence of Indonesia, Libya, Eritrea, and Somaliland." Yet none of these nations has many ties with Pakistan other than the cultural. But promotion of Muslim culture, the late Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan said in Washington in May, 1950, ranks among Pakistan's national aims second only to the integrity of the state itself. He also said (4 May, 1950):

"Culturally, we feel a natural affiliation with other Muslim countries and our relations with them are of the friendliest. We are keenly interested in the progress and development of the Middle East countries and in the maintenance of their independence, as they are in ours. When I talk of our friendship with the Middle East countries, I do not wish you to infer that I am talking in terms of any power bloc. I am merely talking of the natural and religious links, the common culture and the identity of economic outlook that exist between the people of these countries and our people—links that will stand the strain of many a test and will I am sure prove a stabilizing factor in Asia."



Steatite vessel from Susa with (*inset*) a fragment of a vessel from Mohenjo Daro showing the same motif



Painted pottery vase. Harappa, second millennium B.C.



Decorated clay tumbler and goblet, and a ladle probably used for measuring milk. Quetta Valley, Baluchistan



Stone and bone implements unearthed near Kile Ghul Mohammad, Baluchistan

# 5

# THE OLDEST BALUCHISTAN

## LESLIE ALCOCK

THE high barren valleys of northern Baluchistan have recently been making history. A party of Pakistani and American archæologists, exploring the Quetta Valley, discovered what some scholars think is the oldest alphabet in the world. Rich artistic treasures were brought to light; among them was the oldest model of a horse discovered in this country and a number of female statuettes, exquisitely modelled, which seem to presage the later developments of Indo-Pakistani art. On one mound, the earliest settled village so far known in the sub-continent was discovered. It had been occupied by men so primitive that they did not even know the art of making pots. At other places settlements more than three thousand years old were found.

I had the good fortune to take part in this expedition along with other members of the Pakistan Archæological Survey. Our first task, in collaborating with the American archæologists, was to locate as many ancient sites as possible and to fix approximately their dates. Then, on the basis of this ground survey, we could pick out those sites which appeared most promising for excavation. So, for some three weeks we scoured Gwanden, Bhalla Dhast, Gulistan, Pishin, the Quetta Valley and its offshoots by trucks, by jeep and when even this failed, by foot.

The country itself is fascinating. To left and right of the valleys bare and rocky hills tower majestically to graceful

summits. The soil is very fertile and where the water is sufficient, crops and orchards are luxuriant. We found the grapes and water melons a luscious refreshment on our thirsty marches. But water is only obtained with difficulty from rare artesian wells or by the underground water channels known as *karez*. For the most part even the valleys give poor grazing and the ground is so dry that at midday dust-devils tower into the air on all sides.

This, then, was the setting of our search for the mounds which tell of ancient sites. Some of these are high forts like Sra Kala, Pishin, an artificial hill of mud some ninety yards square rising sheer for fifty feet, on which traces of *kachcha* brick walls fifteen hundred years old may still be seen. Others, and especially those which date back to pre-historic times, are lower, gently sloping mounds, covered with fragments of ancient pots: such was Damb Sadaat, nine miles south of Quetta where, later, we carried out excavations. These *dambs* or *ghundis*, as they are known locally, have accumulated over a period of centuries through the building, decay and later rebuilding of mud-walled houses. Several were already known to exist in the Quetta Valley: we discovered more than a dozen which had not previously been noticed. Some of the newly discovered sites proved to be large and of major historical importance. But we were as frequently deceived; we would tramp miles to inspect some likely hillock, only to discover that it was a natural outcrop of rock or gravel. The ancient sites occur side by side with the modern villages and they show that in early times the Quetta Valley was at least as fertile and as well populated as it is to-day.

This exploration, strenuous though it was, formed only a prelude to the main work of excavation. This is itself an exacting task, for it meant standing long hours in the sun, guiding the labourers to see that no damage was done to precious pots or figurines. We endured bitter winds and dust storms, while with numbed fingers we drew up plans of the

buildings which were uncovered. But the task was lightened by the excitements of discovery; even the uncovering of such seemingly dull objects as domestic hearths and ovens thrilled us. It was a pleasure too to come to know the people of Baluchistan—Brahuis, Pathans, Hazaras, Baluchis—in all their rich variety, from the two Hajis who vied with each other in loading us with grapes, to the crabbed old sirdar who expected us to employ even the halt and the lame among his retainers, since he himself was too mean to provide for them.

The earliest traces of occupation which we uncovered were beneath a mound near the village of Kile Ghul Mohammad, a few miles north-west of Quetta. There, near the bottom of a shaft forty feet deep, we came upon the remains of an ancient people who had not known the use of pottery. So far as we could discover, their only tools were stone knives and bone needles and points. Their chief accomplishment was in architecture, for they made themselves houses of sun-dried brick. Now, from several sites in Turkey, Syria, Palestine and Iraq we know that about six thousand years ago men, ignorant of the potter's craft, were making such stone tools, and were living in settled villages; but this is the first time such a site has been discovered in this sub-continent. From these Western Asian analogies, we may infer that the first occupants of Kile Ghul Mohammad had domesticated sheep, goats and cattle, and probably cultivated wheat and barley.

When pottery making was first introduced at Kile Ghul Mohammad, its products were coarse, thick-walled and misshapen, so that it is difficult to say what kind of vessels they were. Improvements came gradually, and eventually two types of pots became popular which in their standards of manufacture and the quality of their painted designs are the equal of any work of modern village potters. The first of these, known to archæologists as Zhob Ware from its prevalence along the Zhob and Loralai Valleys, is distinguished by designs painted in black on a rich red background. Some of these designs are

geometric, but the most attractive show animal figures, especially deer and humped cattle. The second type is known, from the place of its first discovery, as Quetta Ware. It differs from the Zhob type in having a pale brown not a red ground: animal figures are very rare, and in fact were discovered for the first time by our expedition.

There is adventure even in excavating pots. I had been removing the pieces of a large storage jar which, fractured by the weight of the overlying earth, had nonetheless retained its shape. Inside was a ball of compact earth which preserved the form of the jar. I picked this up, and remarked jokingly to the labourers 'Just look at my pot'. The ball of earth crumpled suddenly and out of its centre popped a little goblet completely undamaged. It was the most perfect of all our discoveries at Damb Sadaat.

The people who used 'Quetta' Ware migrated to Baluchistan from south-western Iran, entering perhaps along the Nushki road which leaves the deserts of Afghanistan and, winding laboriously over the Nuskhi and Lak passes through the frowning Shaikh Wazil Gorge, debouches finally into the broad and fertile Quetta plains near Damb Sadaat. Here at least we uncovered, in a shaft some thirty-five feet deep, rich evidence of their occupation. In their migration they displaced—whether peacefully or not we cannot say—the earlier occupants of the site, whose connections were with the plains of the Indus. The Quetta people occupied Damb Sadaat for some hundreds of years, possibly about four thousand five hundred years ago. Their hearths and homes decayed and were rebuilt; their beautiful pots were cherished for a while then, broken, were swept aside till the archæologist might find and reconstruct them. At length a new people appeared, at first as friends and traders, then with sudden violence wresting the village from its owners, overthrowing their houses and ovens, and setting up their own buildings upon the debris. Such is the history told us by dumb potsherds. What these newcomers called

themselves we shall probably never know, but in honour of the site where their remains were first discovered, *we* have called them the 'Sadaat' people. Study of the sherds which we collected in the course of our survey shows that they, like their predecessor, settled widely in Quetta-Pishin.

If we know nothing of the political history of these people, of their names or those of their rulers, we have at least a clear picture of their daily life. Their houses were small-roomed—the rooms are usually only some 7 x 10 feet inside—with thick walls of sun-dried brick. Occasionally stone too is used in building. Brick and stone-paved hearths frequently occupy one corner of a room, or even the centre of the floor. There are no signs of the wall niches or cupboards common in local houses to-day, but large earthen jars were used for storage as they still are among the lower classes. But an even more interesting survival is that of the *tandur* or hollow earthen oven. We found several of these, all unfortunately damaged, in the yards outside the houses. They were immediately recognized by our workmen who took us down the hill to see a modern *tandur* actually in use in the farm-yard by the site. And from numerous thin slabs of sandstone, fire-blackened on one side, we concluded that people four thousand years ago made themselves *chappathis* just as their descendants do to-day.

These Quetta and Sadaat people were great meat-eaters too, to judge from the bones of sheep and goat which littered the floor of their dwellings. Their fondness for drink is similarly shown by the numbers of beakers, tumblers and goblets, made with the finest clay, and frequently decorated with delightful painted designs. It is quite likely that the drink in question was some intoxicant: but the little clay ladle illustrated (fac. p. 39) seems likely to have been used for measuring milk. Corn was not ground, as it is to-day, with a circular hand mill, but was placed on a slightly hollowed stone and was then pounded with a pebble. Nor had farmers and craftsmen the iron tools and implements of their descendants. Copper and perhaps lead

were the only metals used and those but rarely. Tools were usually chipped from chert, or carefully ground down from shale or from bone.

We know nothing of the appearance, and very little of the dress and personal ornaments of these people. They used buttons to fasten their clothes, which suggests that they wore coats rather than flowing robes. The women wore simple beads of shell or stone, though these—if we can take the evidence of the goddess figurines—may have been arranged in elaborate strands. From the same figurines we may suspect that the womenfolk built their hair up on top in an elaborate fashion, and hung it forward over their shoulders in plaits; on another figurine the tresses run down behind to the waist. Finally, we found a few very tiny pots which were clearly meant for cosmetics—most probably the ever-popular Kohl.

Primitive though their material equipment was, art had reached a high standard of achievement. This is evident not only from the painted pottery which we have seen already, but also from the figurines of animals and goddesses which were modelled in clay. Most of the animals are humped bulls, similar to those found further south in the Makran; they may have been children's toys, but it is more likely that they were worshipped. The model horse gave us a great surprise, for though it is known that the horse had been domesticated at an early period by the nomads of the Zhob, this is the earliest image of it yet found in the sub-continent. Occasionally too, we found clay models of houses with tiny square-cut doors and windows and their exteriors gaily painted.

But the most interesting of the figurines are those of the Mother-Goddess. These are so like stone and pottery figures of the Buddhist period that we began to wonder whether the site was *really* as old as we believed; arguments raged for days, but nevertheless we agreed in the end that both the site and its statuettes must be some four thousand years old. Mother-Goddesses were common at this period throughout the Middle

East from Crete to the Indus Valley; but the examples which we found here are especially interesting. They are distinguished firstly by the very fine modelling of the breasts, the hair, and the ornaments. Secondly, they fall in a category well known in the mythology of the sub-continent, that of the Goddess whose powers are exercised as much for destruction as for reproduction. From the full and beautiful bodies of these figurines, it is clear that they represent a bountiful goddess, overflowing with the abundance of Nature: but the faces, where they exist, are masks of hate, grotesque and terrifying. Such was the double nature of Kali, or of Hariti, the goddess of infantile epidemics who was also worshipped as a giver of children. The Goddess figurines which we found come probably from a temple where they had been deposited as votive offerings. Similar statuettes are found throughout northern Baluchistan, and they throw vivid light on religious beliefs some four thousand years ago.

But our most surprising discovery, of interest to scholars of all periods, is that of a series of potters' marks on many of the vessels used both by the Quetta and Sadaat peoples. These marks, which resemble the V's, W's, A's, T's and other letters of the Roman alphabet, were incised either with a sharp stick or finger nail on the base or neck of the pot while the clay was still damp. Perhaps they denoted the potter, or the prospective owner; alternatively they may be magical symbols. Only single signs have been discovered, so we cannot say whether or not they represent a primitive script: but clearly they could easily lead to the invention of writing. It is particularly important that they are quite unlike the contemporary picture-writing of the Indus Valley or Mesopotamia and the Near East. If the date assigned by archæologists to the Quetta period is even approximately correct, then we have here in Baluchistan the earliest *known* example of a completely conventionalized non-pictographic script. Certainly the discovery is an exciting and provoking one for scholars everywhere.

Much, then, has been found, but much more remains to be done before we can even sketch the early history of Pakistan's western borderlands. Our potters' marks, for instance. We require many more examples of them, even some lengthy inscriptions, before we can begin to piece together an alphabet. The temple which we found lay too near the surface, and had been too disturbed in recent times, to allow us to reconstruct it. We must, therefore, seek another site where it may be possible to recover the religious architecture of early Baluchistan in all its detail. Finally we have not yet explored the relations between the peasant cultures of the hills and the great contemporary civilization of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa: but in our survey of Loralai we discovered a mound where this relationship may easily be examined. It is but right and natural that a young Islamic state should wish to concentrate its studies on the early Islamic settlement; but Pakistan should not neglect those earliest periods which link her so intimately to her western neighbour, Iran. And if the Archæological Survey itself is pre-occupied, it is at least to be hoped that continued encouragement will be given to foreign expeditions, that Pakistan may retain her high place in international scholarship.

# 6

## PAKISTAN IN EARLY SASANIAN TIMES

M. SPRENGLING

As Mohenjo Daro's dwellings of the dead threw new light on a sector of Pakistan's deepest antiquity, so new source material and new work is rewriting early Sasanian times in Pakistan.

Religiously the followers of Bardaisan and after them Mani's early mission appear there, reaching as far north as Kandahar.

Politically the early Sasanian empire reaches farther east than was formerly supposed, though not as far as some, notably Ernst Herzfell, first thought.

The new Shahpuhr I (Sapor) inscription in Parthian and Middle Persian Pahlavi and in Greek, and a new inscription of the high priest Kartir with a new reading of another, poorly legible, and two more welding these two together, all in what may be called a definitive reading, are now in the hands of the present masters of the Oriental Institute of Chicago, waiting for them to find means as they can and methods of publication, as they see fit.

In brief form, with no literary or other aids at hand, this writer, who first read and published in preliminary form much of the new material, can say that early Sasanian history touching Pakistan now shows:

1. An early form of Christianity, poetically imaginative, Asiatic rather than Greek or Roman, was founded at Urfa (Urhai, Edessa) in Mesopotamia by Bardaisan (Bardesaes) just

before the rise of the Sasanians. Bardaisan was interested in India and Indian lore. Probably as 'Thomas Christians', his followers made their way to India with the Acts of Judas Thomas and its beautiful 'Hymn of the Soul'.

2. Influenced by Bardaisan (and others) Mani then founded his religion to succeed and displace Christianity and other religions just as the Sasanian empire was rising on the ruins of the Parthian. The climate seems not to have been healthy for such a venture in Iran (Persia) and Iraq under Ardashir I. Anyway, during his reign Mani followed the Bardaisanite 'Thomas Christians' eastward, not as was once thought to learn, but to found a branch of his own church in or just north of what is now West Pakistan. Probably in this connection Mani or his followers appropriated the 'Hymn of the Soul' with minor changes to suit their ideas.

3. This religious drift eastward into Pakistani area is connected with the expansion of the early Sasanian empire in this direction. How far Ardashir I went is not certain. Shahpuhr I clearly includes in his empire the greater part of West Pakistan, drawing the boundary up through Peshawar as far north as Tashkent. Shahpuhr's Coronation brought Mani back to Iraq to a pretty clearly tolerated position in the empire, perhaps even at the court of Shahpuhr I.

4. With this the long unknown founder of Sasanian (Zoroastrian) Mazdaism, the high priest Kartir (not to be confused with the courtier Kartir, son of Ardahan) rose to power and prominence. Under Shahpuhr he was charged with the spread of his reformed Mazdaism over the lands that Shahpuhr for a short or long time incorporated in his empire. Not under Shahpuhr, nor under his favoured son Hormizd-Ardashir—but under the sideline of two (or three) priest-ridden Bahrans (Varahrans) Kartir tried to establish his religion *alone* in their empire and attempted to eliminate by harsh persecution Brahminism, Buddhism, Judaism, two forms of Christianity, and Manichæism, here first called Zindikism. The Bahrans

were followed, not without violence, by another Shahpuhr son, Marseh (Narses, Narsaios, Narisahi), who, as sort of heir-apparent like England's Prince of Wales, had been made Shah of Seistan, Baluchistan, and Hind (Sind) 'to the seashore', that is, West Pakistan and a bit more. The as yet imperfectly published Paikuli inscription and other known facts show that Marseh defeated the Bahrams with Kartir and others and not only deposed them, but sought to cancel them out of history, in Kartir's case with astounding success for more than fifteen centuries. Marseh then renewed the war against Rome, neglected under Kartir's Bahrams, at first successfully, in the end disastrously. Shahpuhr (Sapor) II, 'of the long reign', did much to avenge the defeat of his grandfather Marseh and to stop Rome's aggressive advance eastward.

# 7

# PILGRIMAGE THROUGH TIME

EMILY POLK

To us Thatta was a mystery. Thatta was a remote point in books on architecture. It was an outpost around which circled names in history's wind—Alexander, Muhammed Bin Qasim, Akbar, Shahjahan—and we resolved to visit it.

One September morning, the sun already bleaching the air with heat, we began our pilgrimage to Thatta. Even though the day was a holiday and the hour early, our car was forced to move slowly through the frantic complex of Karachi's traffic. Bicycles, motor rickshaws, camel carts lurched, roared and dipped in and out among push barrows, trucks and lorries, trams, buses, donkey carts, bicycle rickshaws, motor cycles and every complexion of automobiles, large, booming, proud or small, squeaking and nervous. And everything was interwoven and defined by the bright activity of walking men and running children quite uncurbed literally. The ingredients of these streets would have taxed the systematics of any frail directing mortal, but the Karachi traffic policemen seemed to be imbued with divine imperturbability and stood at each intersection, at the very conflux of four or five distracting processions with a detached celestial air. With sleight-of-hand and pivoting body they caused the processions to flow forward with a variety of order and some speed.

We shuttled through all of this and approached the city's outskirts. We passed grey factory buildings sitting like holiday ghosts. Beside the highway stood self-conscious housing units,

stark and greenless, and to the left could be seen concrete bubbles—houses—fact or fiction—experimental concrete wombs for atom age progeny.

Out here the desert seemed to run in like a hot tide between the buildings, the scattered bulkheads and sea-walls of the city. Men had made another island in one of the world's oceans. Here the ocean was a desert; somewhere else it would be a jungle, a sea, or even snow that was pushed back. By concrete and steel, men had enlarged their borders which would either be carefully planted with pleasant suburban flowers, or left to the weeds and refuse of neglect.

The highway pierced through the desert ahead. A few bold-fisted houses were thrust up out of the dry earth. Two or three factory buildings were scattered across the landscape—great boxes tossed there by a hot wind. Farther along, the airport lay across the plain like a vast envelope, stamped by orderly buildings, postmarked by adventure from the ends of the earth.

The desert began to stretch out between each human structure until it was all desert and our eyes were busy with subtleties of colour and form. Plateau and hillock traced pale moving lines against the paler sky. Shadow of contour flowed into shadows of tone. Buff, pink, lavender and shades of white, blended and moved in an earth rainbow, delicate as dust and as easily blown. The desert hummed with hot light. As there is always one particular natural force that flavours and colours the various surfaces of the earth—ocean lands, rain lands, snow lands—here every element and identity merged into one absorbing consciousness—SUN—— Any creature daring to live under its penetrating government was forced to conform in colouring and habit to the sun's ways. Desert animals whose rain-land relatives wear dark glossy coats, are pale and unreflecting—move shadowless across a chalk brown ridge. Birds are animated stones and straw in colour, the finch-lark pale as the dust. Sand and twigs, the gently whistling crested lark perched on a clod of earth.

There was almost no traffic on the highway by now and we sped along enjoying the space and play of light. To the left the plateau appeared to be troubled. There were furrows and humps on its sun-browned brow. As we came abreast we could see that it was a community of ruined tombs, whittled by dry wind and blowing sand, age defaced. A side road turned towards them but no signs were posted with names or explanations. We watched the changing perspective of their forms as we passed. Their colour was the earth's; they could have been ejected from it by eruption. How long they must have stood there! Our imaginations stirred. Their long endurance in the sun—their place in memory after memory of men! Perhaps they were once the landmark of travellers, and at night around a caravan's camp-fire someone may have said, 'In three suns' journey you will come to barren tombs—in one more sun, the sea.'

The tombs faded into moving heat, and on we sped. Soon the highway ran through a cluttered village. It seemed to be deserted. Its bazaar, pleasantly tree shaded, stretched in shabby disorder along the highway. A stray dust-coloured dog nosed through the litter.

We left the village behind and raced ahead. Raced into the shimmering light, down a dry nullah, up and over a barren ridge and suddenly the world was a magic of green. Water—easy and liquid! Had a mirage become substantial? Someone said, 'Here is the area where all the vegetables for Karachi are grown. The Indus is just over there.'

This was the month of September and the river still bloomed in flood from the monsoon rains. It sent its water out into the low surrounding country to settle like a fertile fragrance and transform the receptive land into a paradise. It was a transient four-months paradise to be sure,

*but who counts days*
*when fish leap among green dizzy grass,*

*when tangled hummocks, green capped,*
*float on glass-reflected sky*
*and waterlilies?*
*Where is the desert now?*
*Rioting parakeets ridicule the threat of deserts.*
*Small fish leap,*
*men flash cobweb nets, circles in the sun,*
*splashing traceries to trap silver laughing fish.*
*Miracle Indus.*
*A water wand waved over sand drops the seeds of water.*
*Up spring the greens of river memory,*
*patterns that began*
*when young Indus pressed her virgin way*
*through primeval clay*
*pressed through desert-blistered rock,*
*sun ached desert,*
*to her beloved sea . . .*
*and spread her bridal robes*
*like water*
*over eager land.*

There were miles of this charming area. One passing scene was unbelievable. In the middle distance a lustrous rolling meadow lay edged and embroidered with round green trees, and animated by placid cows serenely swinging their tails. It could have been England—Hampshire or Kent—'spring' on a calendar.

We turned into a side road and drove towards the river. The road was built up from the fields and was narrow and broken. It passed bedraggled reeds that thickened into a dense scum-draped fringe as we neared the river banks. The road had dropped away in places and squalid thatched huts had encroached the length of the last five hundred yards, crowded and littered with wild untidy children, chickens, dogs, goats and flies. The end of the road was built out as a pier which

was connected to the other bank by a ferry boat that plied patiently all day back and forth across the Indus.

The Indus . . . this mud-welted stretch of slow water! But the name as one said it, removed the stains of reality and as we turned back to continue towards Thatta, all the accumulated connotations of 'Indus' blew around me. Blew me back to early classroom adventure. The 'geography' lessons when I sat at my desk with a tall thin book. The teacher said, 'Who can name the important rivers of the world?' Up my hand flew, 'Mississippi, Thames, Rhine, Seine, Tigris-Euphrates, Ganges, Indus . . .' this Indus . . . Then 'History' out of a short fat book, '. . . And Alexander travelled down the Indus to its mouth establishing fortified posts at strategic points.'

I remembered all this and looked towards the river. Perhaps just there by that clump of withered trees was a 'strategic point' fortified by a group of tired mercenary Greek soldiers. How they would have paced back and forth glaring at the desert that waited at their backs. How they would gather around the night fires and conjure up for one another visions of their gentle home land—velvet hills, soft sky, flocks on grass, girls dancing. They were deeply burned, those Greeks, there on the smirking desert. Their ardent Grecian faces were bitter. Their youth that had leapt so joyfully to follow Alexander to the East was slowly being burned out of their bodies. What happened to them? So many things could have. One may have followed a young river woman, and fathered an ancestor of that man we passed back there walking on the road with his head wrapped in a high dark red sun-defying turban. Two may have fought over some trifling possession—a trinket looted in battle claimed by two, who died together linked by dissolving heat, the anger of discontent. Three may have offended the river men, seduced their wives, stolen their scanty treasure and, one night just over that ridge to our left, beside that crop of stone, the river men waited for them. Four may have dropped with fever, dropped in the accumulated fear of drying

pools and endless desert. When ten go, twenty become frightened. When twenty are afraid forty then four thousand men rebel—compel Alexander, shaken from his dream by the force of rebellion, to begin the fretting journey up river, over mountains—home, the gods willing, home to Greece—the Greece he would never see again.

The car rushed on past the rocks and ridges of history. Suddenly I felt tired; the times were so great, too much to live those lives and mine, too. Someone announced, 'Look there, on the horizon—the Makli tombs—dozens of them!' We all laughed with anticipation. Weariness blew away on the breath of our laughter. The Makli Ridge—the book had been explicit, '. . . the Makli Ridge along which, for mile after mile, extends an astonishing array of Muslim tombs, to a number which has been estimated at a million.' Earlier in the chapter the author had intrigued us with the words, '. . . but it is at Thatta . . . that the purest and completest examples of the Persian Mode survive.'

Persia—one more flavour that had been stirred into the rich cultural mixture of the Indus Valley. Approaching the tombs we thought of these ingredients; thought of the eternal puzzle —who were the first men, the primitive wild creatures—striking stone on stone, thinking—thinking—using man's divine ability to add thought to thought—to strike stone on stone, to create and build on to his creation. These men had been here, they had walked the prehistoric earth of Sind—a moist nuptial earth in those days with rains and rain-forests. Then behind them in time walked the men and women of Kulli; walked over from Baluchistan with their carts and cattle to trade on the banks of the Indus with the men who came down the river from Mohenjo Daro, who brought bits of bronze and cloth from Persia to exchange for the stone and alabaster objects, boxes and knife blades, that the Kulli people made.

After these people came the exuberant Aryan hordes, with

swords and chariots of war, overrunning, destroying—but the Kulli women became the mothers of Aryan children, children who contained the continuing primeval inheritance; children who passed on to Darius's men this ancient being when the Persians marched in claiming the Indus area and took the slender women, the primeval prehistoric Aryanic women to bear their sons, sons whose daughters bore the children of Alexander's men, children who built Taxila, sons whose Greek-named daughters lay with the soldiers of Asoka—the Ganges' sons, and daughters of the Indus—whose children were born with the blood of ancient rivers in their veins.

Other peoples swept through; spent their vigour here, adding their exotic qualities, their religions and memories—Bactrians, Scythians, Parthians; the Kushan nomads from Central Asia; Arabs bringing the first shape of Islam—the first mosque sprung from Arab hands near the mouth of the Indus. Then Persianized Turks with firm lasting energy to father the great Mogul Empire, to leave behind '—the lovely tiled mosques of Thatta, isolated on the fringe of the Sindhi Desert . . . Iranian architecture transplanted with scarcely any modification . . .'

The highway approached a small, official hut. A guard directed us up a stone-outlined road to the tombs. At the top of the ridge on which they stood we parked the car beside the road and got out. The sun blazed. Heat leapt up from the ground causing us to hurry around a wall, up a stairway, through a doorway and into a courtyard. Inside the courtyard the heat beat back and forth from wall to floor to wall. The light drained one's eyes of sight and sent us quickly into the great arch-shadowed doorway that welcomes one into the tomb. As sight flooded back one could begin to see the shading walls and sheltering dome above. One could look silently and allow the quiet tranquil colour to envelop him. The heat and the saturating light were left behind. An invisible curtain of cool air hung down from the massive arch of the entrance.

The serenity lay in the liquid colour of the tile. Blues and white in a pointing pattern covered the walls and dome and ascended in succeeding radiating waves to an exquisite tiled apex. One was impelled to walk slowly around and around, to lean to the walls and look up, to expand in the ancient shade. But there was much to be seen and with a fleeting prayer of grateful pleasure we walked out into the sun again.

A large drum-shaped building stood near by. It was an unfinished tomb. The walls reached up and in, but were completed by a dome of blue sky rather that the intended masonry. The effect was thrilling and disturbing as in the Pantheon at Rome; a sense of being enclosed but undefended, of being at the bottom of a pit; a sense of being watched in secret, of something about to happen, like Damocles at the mercy of unexpected sins.

Further along the ridge to the left was a walled courtyard with an arched doorway that urged one to enter. Inside, a handsome tomb, as carved and fluted as a sandalwood fan, stood airily in the sun. Its domes gleamed like white bubbles against the white-hot sky. Its façade was intersected by a delicate balcony. 'I'm going up,' one of us announced. 'But look, the whole building leans to one side—is it safe?' 'Safe enough for to-day,' the brave one answered. The narrow steep adventurous stair opened out on to the balcony. The air moved more easily up here, stirred through the open filigree of the balustrade. The explorer among us announced, 'The stair goes on up to the roof. The outlook will be wonderful,' and began to climb. The steps led up into the stunning light among the white bubbles. The sun sang against the large dome, echoed against the small ones. Below, the ridge dropped away to a reed-filled ravine. On its other side another ridge lifted sharply. Beyond that and just visible over it, was an intriguing jumble of square roofs. 'That's Thatta, over there.' The roof line must have changed but slightly since Thatta was founded some time in the fifteenth century. The desert demands its own

architecture, imposes such rigid conditions that neither whim nor innovation, products of easy fertility, can impose themselves on the timeless desert forms. Perhaps the Governor of Thatta had stood here on the roof of his tomb which was undoubtedly built to be enjoyed during his lifetime, had stood here staring at the roofs of his capital city. But he could not have stayed long if the sun was as arrogant as this. He would have soon turned down the dark stairwell and into the shaded central chamber where to-day his gravestone rests.

We turned the car down the hill. 'What about lunching over by those trees?' Here was a side road that would apparently take us there. It skirted around another part of the Makli Hill. On its crest loomed several imposing structures. They had to be explored. Up the slope the path at last approached the important looking tomb glimpsed on the way.

In form it differed completely from all the others. It was a roofless square, tall and narrow. In the centre of the façade beside the door was fitted an intricately carved, rather wilfully projecting area, topped by a balcony. The surface of the building otherwise was flat, relieved only by simple geometric bands interspaced with smooth reddish stone blocks. It appeared to have been built as a means of using the elaborate treasure proudly ornamenting the façade, much as one might buy an early Dutch sideboard and have to build a house around it. There were other stray bits of complex ornament attached to the tomb, window frames, parts of the doorway. Just inside and to the left of the entrance was the inner wall of the elaborate piece of furniture. And instantly the puzzle became clear, for a staircase was enclosed in it, mounting, by intersected angles, to the open balcony above. So it *was* a piece of furniture, an exquisite fanciful staircase from some earlier building, apparently of Hindu inspiration, that was too marvellous to be demolished and since it detailed no animate forms, was acceptable as a feature in a Muslim tomb.

The openwork staircase came out on the balcony, the steps

continuing to the roof level. Up here the walls which were seven or eight feet thick made a terrace around the roofless top of the building. As one walked along, one could look down into its unfinished interior. On the far side at the outer edge, the ridge could be seen to drop sharply away from the wall below, and plunge into a rich bed of reeds and water-rushes sprung from the high rain waters in their quarter year of greenery. At a distance to the left, and under the shadow of pale stone buildings on the overhanging ridge, the reeds and rushes retreated to form a wide luxuriant pool. Trees leaned tenderly over it, pale lotus flowers floated silently on the clear water, parakeets flashed above, and to crown the joy of the scene, herdsmen with their cattle and water buffaloes lay idly on the bank. Some of the men were swimming, they leaped in the water with shouts and laughter. This must have been an unexpected delight added to the original idea of the founders of Thatta . . . this lovely sympathy between silence and sound . . . the sun world and water world; between transient water, and the high, abiding, sentinel tombs.

The onslaught of the sun, the edge of height, the need for food after an endless morning suddenly was overwhelming. We turned towards the embroidered stairwell. Down around a hill, past a reeded waterway we turned on to a wide tree-lined road, banked by continuous pools of reeds and lotus. Lunch was served here, and eaten sitting on the car cushions which were pulled out on to the ground to cover the long dangerous thorns that bristled on the banks. The water below the road bank was clear and flowing gently. Waterlilies lit the surface with pale blossoms. In the distance camels waded among the shrub-covered hillocks stretching their necks for the highest leaves. They moved deliberately through the grassy flood to recreate a primeval scene. Large Alexandrine parakeets tumbled through the air flashing their green and yellow tails as they whirled in circles through the trees. Groups of men and women clothed in piercing vibrant colours—pinks,

dark reds, orange, crimson, yellow—travelled along the road with their carts and animals. They stared politely at us, slowly turning their heads to watch as they continued straight ahead. The men rode in the carts, the women walked quickly beside them. Sindhi people, inheritors of old complexities, returning ancient answers to contemporary questions. This tranquil moment was difficult to leave, but there was Thatta itself to be seen as soon as the last delicious crumb had been eaten.

The highway on its way to Hyderabad passes through the central part of Thatta then continues on through the desert. About three miles outside the present city but at what was its very heart during Akbar's reign, stands the Dabgir mosque. The pictures of this most ancient of Thatta's mosques in its ruined state show its delicate form still apparent in spite of the changes of time, but one could hardly be prepared for the grotesque restoration that has taken place. Where charming structural recesses had been are now flat crude slabs of concrete. The fragile sensitive curves, domes, and edgings are overlaid with sharp edges and coarse blatant domes. The whole restoration has transformed a structure of rare spiritual charm into a puny Roman fortress. It was a major sin, this restoration, distorting forever a gift of great beauty and value, a gift coming into the present day from the time, perhaps the order, of Akbar. It points a disfigured finger at the important fact that restorations which are, of course, needed must be done by archæologists and architects who are dedicated to the truths of antiquity, of an antiquity whose builders worked close to the laws of nature and its infallible beauty, and not with the vulgar self-will or at best stolid indifference of to-day's unstructural mechanics.

The tile work of the interior of the Dabgir mosque compensates for the loss of the façade. The quality of its colours, the fantasy of the designs, the soaring arches, the walls and borders combine into a picture of exquisite light and shadow, depth and surface. Much is gone that cannot and should not be

replaced, but the remaining parts create an unforgettable atmosphere.

Near the centre of Thatta a narrow street turns off the highway and penetrates into the complex of the city. The buildings, tall square boxes set at uneasy angles to one another, rise on either side for several storeys. They appear so unsteady that one feels that the vibration of the motor might bring them tumbling down. After several blocks and just before crossing the intersection of the street and a small lane, one of us looked back. 'There's the Jami Masjid, in the lane!' The enclosing wall is whitewashed just as are the other buildings along the street and only a rim of brilliant tiles about the entrance betrays the mosque.

The wide entrance arch was walled and ceilinged with tile. I looked closely at it. It was arranged in a most interesting pattern. The principal units appeared to be made up of ten points, two overlaid five-armed stars with a common centre. The lines which defined these arms continued past its own circular unit and intersected a subsequent unit in such a way as to form a point on its circumference, to form one of the star points, and having done this it continued on straight through the entire design forming one element after another in the design. The entire pattern continuing on over the ceiling and down the other side appeared to be made up of extended straight lines so subtly arranged as to form the complex order of circles and stars.

The others had gone on into the courtyard. I followed. The sun poured itself down into the court and sent us hurrying towards the shadowy domed corridors that circled the open centre. The walls and arches were tiled also. I looked carefully at them. I called to the others, 'Look at this tiling, it seems to be variations in emphasis on the pattern in the entrance.' They looked. 'Does it?' the others asked vaguely, burning more with the heat of the day than with interest in tile patterns.

The impact of endless designs, the series of domes and arches

under which we walked finally overwhelmed us into silence until weary almost to boredom we walked into the prayer chamber. Perhaps I should say the prayer chamber captured us. It caught us up into a blue vortex and held us suspended in an atmosphere of blowing shadow, resting us in an air bluer than heaven because it was all around us. This was a blue like that ancient window of blue stained glass in the cathedral at Chartres, a blue that as you looked at it, particularly as we did on the late afternoon of a wild December's blizzard, standing in the darkening chill of the cathedral, wind wailing outside, a blue that seemed to surround you, seemed to send wave after wave of quivering living blue light to enter your being and lift you endlessly into itself. To experience this colour in circumstances of violent contradiction, extremes of heat and cold, was more than remarkable, it was a revelation. 'The stars' of the prayer chamber dome 'sang together'. We leaned there listening to their blue diapason.

'It must be time to go.' Out into sun, and into the car. We fell back against the cushions. 'I can't see any more,' I said. 'If there's anything more to see, I don't want to see it.' 'There's an interesting bazaar with excellent pottery, and hand loomed fabrics. And they bottle a delicious sherbet here with silver flakes in it.' 'Let's not, it's too much.' We all sighed with relief at going home. 'We'll come again, won't we, because I must trace those tile patterns—I really believe that the prayer chamber dome is worked out on the same basic design with . . .' The others chorused, '. . . with variations in emphasis!'

We stopped talking and drove ahead. The sun was low in the sky. Shadows lay across the flooded water-gardens. Birds flew in dark flocks over the lavender desert. The sun was down when we re-approached the day-deserted village. Night had brought it into giddy life. Lanterns and coloured lights were festooned from tree to tree the length of the bazaar. The stalls and barrows twinkled with customers. Dogs and children skittered under foot, a breeze stirred through the lighted trees.

Eventually we passed the airport—its formal rows of impersonal lights. The new housing unit was softened by night and home-making; the concrete bubble houses seemed more humorous than distressing now.

We re-entered Karachi. Its streets were serene. A few bicycle rickshaws turned absentmindedly into our path and out again at our honk. We drove unhampered towards home. A delicious breeze spun sea-cool air around us. 'Perhaps,' I thought, 'now *is* the only time, as the prophets say, and the miracles we saw to-day were fascinating dust.'

# 8

## GULBADAN BANO BEGUM

### WINIFRED HOLMES

ONE day in the second half of the sixteenth century an emperor called upon one of his aunts to 'write down whatever she knew' of the doings of his grandfather and father, the Mogul Emperors Babur and Humayun. No one knew better than she, this lively and observant aunt, Gulbadan Begum, 'Princess Rosebody,' the inside story of the happenings of the two reigns from an intimate family point of view. Would she, who had already won a reputation for her poetry and who was known to be a connoisseur of books, write her own Memoirs of 'Firdaus-makani' and 'Jannat-ashyani'—('Dwelling' and 'Nestling in Paradise')? She would.

And so it came about that a Turki princess, descendant of Timur and Genghis Khan, daughter of Babur, sister of Humayun, aunt of Akbar, wife of Khwaja Khizr Khan, came to write a book which, though little known outside the world of scholarship, is a minor classic.

The MS. of the 'Ahwal-e-Humayun', which is written in Persian in a fine and even nastalik handwriting—very probably Gulbadan's own—lives now in the British Museum. Although it covers part of Babur's reign, during which the author was a child, it chiefly concerns that of Humayun; with whose fortunes hers were closely linked. Written from a woman's point of view it has delicacy and tact, humour and tenderness, and the apparent artlessness of the writing conceals true art.

Gulbadan's style is deceitfully simple and direct, and her refusal to be drawn into heroics has led some scholars into believing that her Memoirs are of secondary importance, even of second-rate quality: mere women's gossip, being the implication. Yet her lack of clichés and verbiage and the gay freshness and hidden pathos of her descriptions of scenes and events, her ability to draw a living portrait in a phrase, are those of a born novelist of a high order, although she never wrote fiction.

A new appraisal of Gulbadan Begum's book and of her quality as a writer is overdue. Although her output was small, her kinship in art is with Jane Austen. Both women wrote of what they knew and were content to remain within their family and social circles. Neither questioned the established order of things and both hid a gentle irony beneath apparent guilelessness. Both, though their hearts were engaged and their lives touched tragedy at times, were too well-bred to do more than hint at emotional stress or to dwell on sordidness and evil, however deeply they were moved by them.

Both had the detachment of the artist, while being greatly loved by those around them. Jane Austen played Country Dances on the piano for her nieces and was the centre of their world. Gulbadan Begum might easily have earned the affectionate title of 'Dearest Lady' that she herself gave to her own beloved aunt, Khanzadeh Begum, Babur's eldest sister. There is not a trace of egotism or vanity in her book and her gentle humour must have made her a delightful companion and have specially endeared her to the younger generation. It is not known whether like Jane Austen she too hid her manuscript when anyone came into the room!

Princess Rosebody had much of her father's humanity and independence of mind. She was one of the three daughters of Babur's wife, Dil-dar Begum, the 'Heart-holding Princess'. The other two, Gul-rang, 'Rose-hued' and Gul-chihra, 'Rose-faced' were older than she. Her brother Hindal was closest to

her in age, being two or three years older only. Her little brother, Alwar, died in childhood.

Babur was still lord of Kabul and the surrounding principalities when she was born in A. H. 929—A.D. 1523. Two years later he set out for the last time to cross the Indus and carve an Empire for himself and his heirs in Hindustan. Gulbadan was left in Kabul with the rest of his womenfolk and children under the nominal command of his twelve-year-old son, Kamran, whose mother was Gulrukh. His eldest son and heir, Humayun, son of Maham, his chief and most-beloved wife, was then seventeen and had the post of Governor of Badakhshan. Now he was ordered to bring an army and accompany his father to Hindustan. Gulbadan reports that Babur was much put out by Humayun's keeping him waiting at the appointed meeting place. She suggests that it was his mother, Maham, who had kept him as she had been parted from him for so long. But as always, Babur forgave Humayun, and they proceeded together to cross the mountains on their decisive adventure—one of the greatest adventures of history.

After a long wait, the news of the victory of Panipat reached Kabul, and rich presents were sent by the victorious Babur to his womenfolk, accompanied by his instructions to give thanks to God. Gulbadan writes that the treasure of five kings fell into his hands but that he gave everything away.

The gifts of 'valuable presents and curiosities of Hind' which he sent 'to my elder relations and sisters and each person of the haram' included 'one special dancing-girl of the dancing-girls of Sultan Ibrahim, with one gold plate full of jewels—ruby and pearl, cornelian and diamond, emerald and turquoise, topaz and cat's eye and two mother of pearl trays full of *ashrafis* and on two other trays *shahrukhis*', to be delivered to each begum. No doubt the small Gulbadan received some small gift herself—though probably not of a dancing-girl!

After Panipat, many of Babur's relations followed him to

Hindustan and were rewarded by being given lands and high appointments at the new court. Among them were some of his 'paternal aunts'. Babur seems to have been very considerate to his womenfolk and only the feminine and delicate pen of Gulbadan could have chronicled this amusing and revealing incident . . .

'All through the four years that my father was in Agra he used to go on Fridays to see his paternal aunts. One day it was extremely hot, and Her Highness my lady (Maham) said, "The wind is very hot, indeed; how would it be if you did not go this one Friday? The begums would not be vexed." His Majesty said, "Maham, it is astonishing that you should say such a thing! . . . If I do not cheer them, how shall it be done?" '

Babur seems to have won the worshipping affection at once of the little daughter he welcomed after her long journey from Kabul. This was after she and her brother Hindal had been taken from their mother Dil-dar and adopted by Maham, who had lost all the children born to her after Humayun. 'A year later my lady, who was Maham Begum, came from Kabul to Hindustan. I, this insignificant one, came with her in advance of my sisters, and paid my duty to my royal father . . . At evening-prayer time someone came and said to him, "I have just passed her Highness on the road, four miles out!" My father did not wait for a horse to be saddled, but set out on foot. He met her near the house of Maham's *nanacha* [nurse?]. She wished to alight, but he would not wait and fell into her train and walked to his own house.'

Gulbadan's description of this milestone in her life is revealing:

'At the time of her meeting His Majesty, she desired me to come on by daylight and pay my respects to him . . . My *mama* [old woman] had made me alight at the Little Garden, and having spread a [small] carpet, seated me on it.' There the child received the Khalifa and his wife, Sultanam, who gave her rich presents, money and eight thoroughbred horses—and

entertained her to a banquet which they described as a 'hasty meal'. 'There was a raised platform on a pleasant spot, and a pavilion of red cloth with lining of Gujrati brocade, and six canopies of silk and brocade, each of a differing colour, and a square enclosure of cloth with painted poles.

'I sat in Khalifa's quarters. The meal drew out to almost fifty roast sheep, and bread and sherbet and much fruit. Having at length eaten my breakfast, I got into my litter and paid my duty to my royal father. I fell at his feet; he asked me many questions, and took me for a time in his arms, and then this insignificant person felt such happiness that greater could not be imagined.'

The child seems to have remembered a good deal of her first impressions of the new country. She relates how her father loved to sit in a *tur-khana*, a pavilion, in the Sikri garden and 'write his book', which we now know as being his own Memoirs. In this same place Gulbadan had an accident. She relates that she and 'Afghani *aghacha* were sitting in the front of the lower storey when my lady went to prayers. I said to Afghani *aghacha*, "Pull my hand." She pulled, and my hand came out. My strength went and I cried. Then they brought the bone-setter and when he had bound up my hand, the Emperor went to Agra.'

It was in another garden, the 'Gold-scattering Garden' of Agra, that Babur made his famous remark, 'My heart is bowed down by ruling and reigning; I will retire to this garden.' But Gulbadan, in recounting this episode, builds up the picture into a complete one of family life and affection. She writes that Babur went on to say that Tahir—the ewer-bearer—would be all he would want for attendance and that he would make over the kingdom to Humayun. 'On this my lady and all his children broke down, and said with tears, "God keep you in His own peace upon the throne many, many years."'

A few days after this she reports that her little brother Alwar fell ill and in spite of all the doctors' attentions grew

worse and died. 'His Majesty was very sad and sorry, and Alwar's mother, Dil-dar Begum, was wild with grief for the child.' But, continues Gulbadan, when Dil-dar's lamentations were too great Babur was impatient with her and arranged an expedition by boat to Dholpur to create a distraction.

Unfortunately one family misfortune was swiftly followed by another. News came that Humayun was seriously ill in Delhi and his mother's presence there was urgently requested. Maham was very upset, Gulbadan relates, and started at once for Delhi, and meeting with her son at Mathura on the way she found him far weaker and 'more alarmingly ill' than she had expected. She hurried their return to Agra, where they were visited by Gulbadan and her sisters.

'He was then growing weaker and weaker. Every time he came to his senses he . . . asked for us, and said, "Sisters, you are welcome! Come and let us embrace one another."

'When Babur came into the sick-room to see his son his countenance became sad and pitiful . . . and showed signs of dread. On this my lady said, "Do not be troubled about my son. You are a king; what griefs have you? You have other sons. I sorrow because I have only this one." His Majesty rejoined, "Maham! Although I have other sons, I love none as I love your Humayun." '

It was then that Babur made the affecting attempt to exchange his own life for that of his eldest son. Gulbadan relates the story in her simple but dramatic way, reinforcing other accounts but giving details that only a woman would note. 'During Humayun's illness his Majesty walked round him and . . . kept up that going-round from the Wednesday, and made intercession . . . in anxiety and deep dejection. The weather was extremely hot and his heart and liver burned. While going round he prayed, saying in effect: "O God! if a life may be exchanged for a life, I who am Babur, I give my life and my being for Humayun."

'That very day he fell ill, and Humayun poured water on his

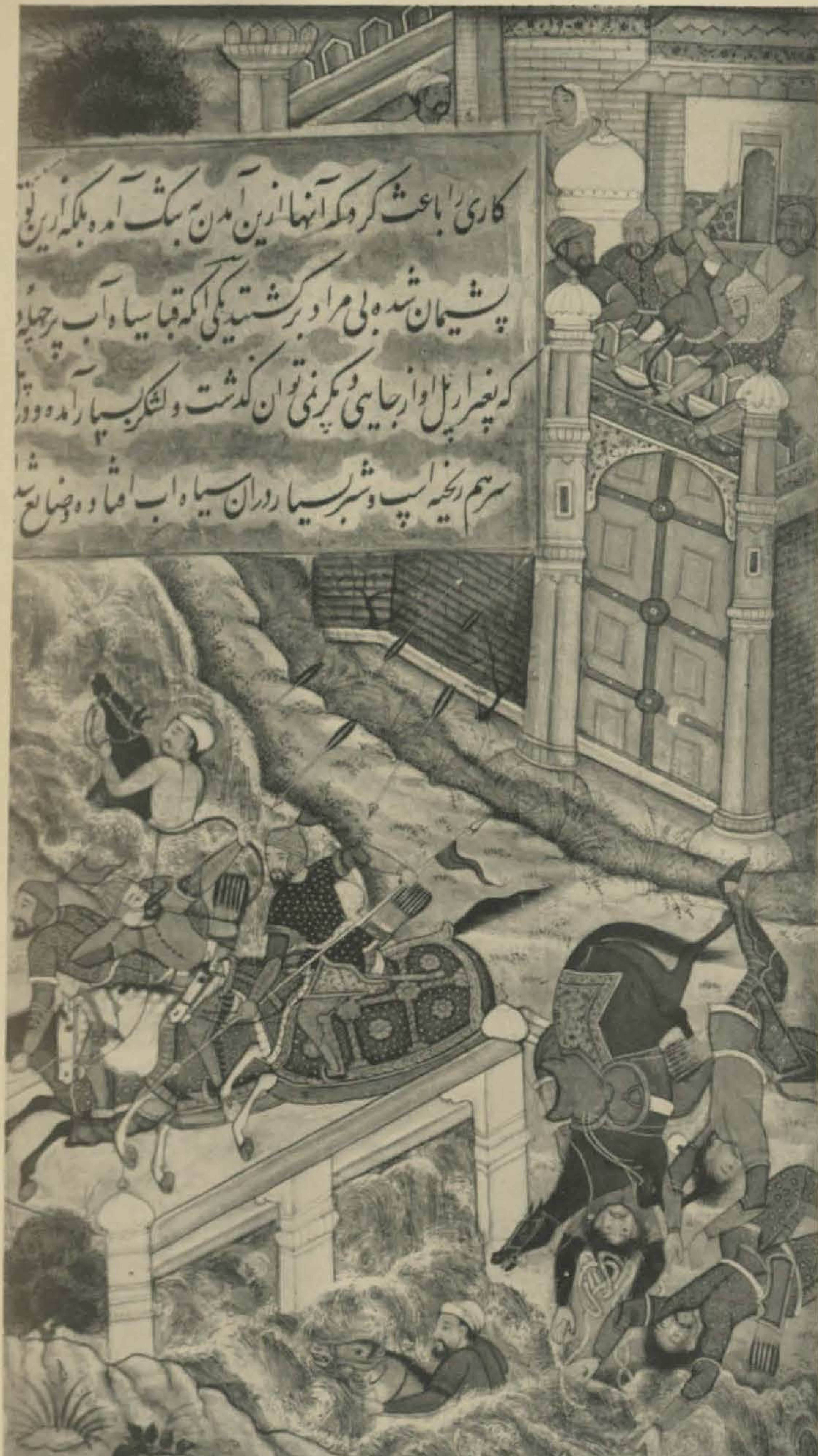
head, and came out and gave audience. Because of his illness, they carried my royal father within, and he kept his bed for two or three months.'

Although Gulbadan does not say so, there is no doubt that Babur himself as well as many of those round him, believed that he had actually given up his life for that of his son. Yet there was also a suspicion current that he had been poisoned. Whatever the cause of his lingering illness, however, it was fatal. Soon after deciding on husbands for Gulbadan's two sisters and making his nobles and chieftains acknowledge Humayun as his successor, Babur died. 'Black fell the day for children and kinsfolk and all. They bewailed and lamented; voices were uplifted in weeping; there was utter dejection. Each passed that ill-fated day in a hidden corner.'

The first years of Humayun's reign were peaceful and the Memoirs of his sister chiefly recount family happenings and occasions of rejoicing. The most splendid of these was the 'Mystic Feast' held to commemorate Humayun's accession. The House of Feasting was set up, she writes, on the river bank. It consisted of a 'large octagonal room with an octagonal tank in the centre . . . and in the middle . . . an octagonal platform on which were spread Persian carpets. Young men and pretty girls and elegant women and musicians and sweet-voiced reciters were ordered to sit in the tank.

'The jewelled throne was placed in the forecourt of the house, and a gold-embroidered divan was laid in front of it, on which His Majesty and dearest lady* sat together.' Ninety-six begums in all sat with them and Gulbadan relates their names. But she cannot help stopping in her breathless list to give a pen-portrait of two of them, which is somewhat amusing, a little sly. 'There were also Shad Begum . . . and Mihr-angez Begum. They had great friendship for one another and they used to wear men's clothes and were adorned by varied

*Babur's eldest sister Khanzadeh Begum, aunt to Humayun, the hostess at the mystic Feast.



Babur holds the citadel of Andajan against the forces of Sultan Ahmed Mirza. An early Mogul miniature depicting an episode from Gulbadan Begum's memoirs



A page from Sa'di's *Gulistan* with miniatures probably by Manohar. Mogul school

accomplishments, such as the making of thumb-rings and arrows, playing polo, and shooting with the bow and arrow.'

While the gay proceedings were going on Humayun, Gulbadan relates, looking down from his gold-embroidered divan raised above the tank, in which the 'pretty ladies and sweet-reciters and others' were sitting, said to his aunt, Khanzadeh Begum, the hostess, 'Dearest Lady! if you approve they might put water in the tank.'

'She replied, "Very good," and went herself and sat at the top of the steps. People were taking no notice, when all at once the tap was turned and water came. The young people got very much excited. His Majesty said, "There is no harm; each of you will eat a pellet of anise and a bit of comfit and come out of there."'

Humayun was fonder of such jokes and of feasting and playing than he was of ruling. To add to this he was an opium addict. Although Gulbadan was perfectly aware of his shortcomings, she never allows herself to criticize, but only reports and illuminates with her fine gifts for selection. In her book the tragic story begins to unroll itself, of Humayun's loss of prestige and support, of his defeat and flight, his years of exile; of his brother Kamran's opposition and final overthrow, of Hindal's misfortunes. Gulbadan's own adventures and hardships are lightly touched on, but there is feeling in every line of her book. She was married about seventeen, it seems, to Khizr Khan, but of him she seldom writes. Her affections and cares seem to have been more with her own relations, with her mother Dil-dar, with whom she was reunited, with Hindal and 'Dearest Lady' and with Hamida-banu, Humayun's most-beloved wife, and her little son, Akbar.

Gulbadan's description of Hamida's refusal to see Humayun, much less to marry him, are amusing and not a little pleasure at the fact of a spirited girl defying an Emperor creeps into her account of his courtship. This was eventually successful, however, as, after all, he was the Emperor, although in exile, and

her hand could be forced. The marriage seems to have been not unhappy, however, and no suspicion of discontent creeps into Gulbadan's later accounts of Hamida.

In fact her descriptions of the exiled Emperor's life at the Shah's court at Khurasan show that Hamida became very close to Humayun who had the propensity, like other Mogul Emperors, of being completely devoted to a favourite wife as well as affectionate and considerate to the other womenfolk around him. Gulbadan writes that when Shah Tahmasp arranged hunting expeditions for Humayun, Hamida-banu Begum 'used to enjoy the sight from a distance in either a camel or a horse-litter'. Shahzad Sultanam, the Shah's sister, however, 'rode on horse back and took her stand behind her brother'.

The story of the stolen rubies, though too long to recount here, brings out Gulbadan's gift of dramatic narrative to the full. Some valuable rubies were part of the imperial treasure, Humayun had brought with him into exile and these were kept in an amulet-case of which only he and Hamida knew. If 'he went away anywhere, he gave the amulet-case into her charge. One day she was going to wash her head, so she bundled the case up in a handkerchief, and put it on the Emperor's bed. Raushan *kuka* thought this a good chance to steal five rubies . . .

'When the begum came back from washing her head, the Emperor gave her the amulet-case, and she at once knew from its lightness in her hand that it had lost weight, and said so. The Emperor asked, "How is this? Except you and me, no one knows about them?" He was astonished.'

The story ends with the discovery of the thief and the rubies by means of a clever ruse on the part of Hamida and her brother Khwaja Mu'azzam, who played the part of a mischievous boy to some effect and won the Emperor's smiling approval when his tricks succeeded in their object, which was to unmask the thief and discover the whereabouts of the jewels.

Humayun is on the whole dealt with gently by his sister, but here and there a hint of her real feelings about his character creeps into her writing. He could be impatient and petulant as well as affectionate and kind to the ladies of his entourage, exiled with him. When in Balkh he 'took up his quarters in the Heart-Expanding Garden' and it was there that the begums persuaded him to let them have an expedition to see the *riwaj* (rhubarb?) growing.

With a somewhat bad grace he agreed, but when small contretemps happened to the begums *en route* he grew annoyed. 'There was a stream in the lower part of the garden which Afghani *aghacha* could not cross and she fell off her horse. For this reason there was an hour's delay.' When the cavalcade set out again another of the begums, Mahr-chuchak, found her horse difficult to manage and went on too fast up the hill. Perhaps her horse bolted: Gulbadan does not exactly specify what happened. But she does recount that Humayun was 'very much annoyed about this'. He told them to go on and said that he would follow when he had taken some opium and got over his annoyance. When he did follow them, she said, 'the look of vexation was entirely laid aside and he came with a happy and beautiful look on his face'. No doubt the opium had something to do with the restoration of his temper.

Though always contained and disciplined, the book becomes charged with emotion towards the end when it is dealing with treachery of Kamran and the death of her own beloved full brother Hindal. In fact it breaks off abruptly at the point where Humayun gave the order to 'blind Mirza Kamran in both eyes'. The last words of the book are these, 'The Sayyid went at once and did so. After the blinding, His Majesty the Emperor. . . .'

The manuscript is not illustrated and little is known of its fate. No doubt it formed part of the imperial library and may have been used for reference by Akbar's historian, Abu-l-Fazl. Gulbadan is mentioned in his book, the *Akbar-namah*,

and in Chapter XIV he describes her arrival with Akbar's wife, Miriam Makani, into India. Gulbadan lived under his protection until she died at the age of eighty in February 1603. Hamida was with her during her last illness, and speaking her name 'Gulbadan' in affection, the dying woman opened her eyes and spoke the verse 'I die—may you live!'

Akbar himself helped to carry her bier for some distance and in her name made lavish gifts to the poor and needy, as in her own life she had always been generous to those less fortunate than herself. She had also made the long pilgrimage to Mecca, recorded by Abu-l-Fazl, during which she experienced shipwreck and many hardships.

# 9

## MUSLIM PAINTING

S. AMJAD ALI

Art work among the Muslims has not been a form of self-conscious æstheticism but a natural concomitant of the business of living. This was so everywhere in the world in the great ages of art production before the modern disintegration of culture. Now life has been so divided up that we are afraid to get work mixed up with recreation, the sacred with the profane, and articles of use with articles of beauty.

The Muslim tradition has always been to expend artistic talent in the normal productive activity of daily life—in the making of cloth and dresses, jewellery and armour, earthen pots and metal utensils, houses and gardens, floorings and curtains, and above all books and book covers. In studying Muslim painting therefore it must be remembered that it is only one of many similar forms of art expression using similar motifs and informed by the same spirit. The art of painting in particular found expression in many media, on paper, leather, walls, wooden trays and boxes and so on.

The advent of Islam proved to be momentous in the field of art. It released infinite constructive energy for work in all fields as was done by all great inspiring movements in history. Thus the local artists of the great conquered countries like Iran and Mesopotamia, Syria and Egypt, not only found a propitious atmosphere to work in but received full encouragement and patronage. Their work was however so canalized into new lines, and so influenced by a new spirit, that art in all the far-

flung countries conquered by Islam soon acquired a distinctive and unmistakable character known as that of Muslim art.

Architecture and all the ministering arts including carving, sculpture, mosaic work, tilework and of course painting, were called upon to build new mosques and palaces, public and private buildings and indeed whole cities such as Kufa and Baghdad, Cairo and Samarra, and many more.

Architectural activity began at once and there are great examples still to be seen of the first century of Islam in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the Mosque of Omar in Cairo, and elsewhere. In these, much of the material and design is borrowed from local sources but even here the seeds of Muslim styles are discernible in arch and pillar, plan and interior decoration.

Painting of walls, too, was much liked by the Arabs as large plain surfaces were anathema to them. If nothing else, they used coloured stone to break the monotony. Actually the vogue of mural paintings or frescoes started very early in Islam and examples have been discovered at Qusayr Amra in Syria going back to the beginning of the eighth century; at Nishapur in Iran, and Samarra in Iraq, dating back to the ninth century; and in Egypt near Cairo belonging to the tenth century. Hellenistic influence is predominant in the first; Sassanian and Central Asian influences have been discerned in the second; the hand of Arab Christians in the third and so forth. But it is also recognized that even in Qusayr Amra there are distinctly Oriental elements, while in Nishapur already the peculiar features of Muslim architecture are found developed, such as the niche, and the decorations done on them include vase motifs and scrolls with palmettes and half palmettes, which had already become established in the Omayyed period and are found in places as far apart as the alabaster capitals discovered at Rakka in Syria, and the wooden pulpit of the mosque of Quairwan in Tunisia. In Samarra, even signed work by Muslim artists has been found and the growth of an all-

pervading style is discernible. In Eygpt the geometrical interlacings, palmette scrolls and arabesques clearly bear the character of Muslim art.

These stray discoveries of fresco paintings must be only a few of many more made, and serve to show that the art of painting received early encouragement, and while it was eclectic in receiving influences from all sides, it soon showed signs of an overriding character of its own which Islam inspired.

This influence was not merely the negative one of prohibiting human forms and thus channelizing artistic ingenuity to invent abstract designs, which is often adduced. It was the positive affirmation of the reality and meaningfulness of the external world which is after all the religion of all art, since to the artist form and not matter is the essence of things, and the symbol of highest significance. Form and external appearances had however been discredited as unreal and illusory by certain religions and schools of thought. The Koran on the other hand constantly adjures us to contemplate the appearances of things and to wring from them testimony of deepest meaning.

The unsophisticated sons of the desert took a naïve and frank delight in the beauty of colour and form. The sensitiveness and wonder with which they beheld the glories of art and nature, when they stepped out of the barren deserts of their homeland, were contagious, and shook into acuter awareness the blunted minds and jaded senses of the nations they conquered.

Above all, however, Islam contributed to the world of art the all-important spiritual stability which comes from a satisfying faith; that high seriousness and loftiness of thought and emotion from which alone great works of art can spring. It is for lack of this that the present age finds itself condemned to a dry cynical attitude in which artists do no more than throw out the froth and fumes of their minds in disjointed little poems and trivial works of art. With the artists of early Islam it was

otherwise. Their values were certain, whatever their practice may have been. Beauty above all was held in high esteem as a spiritual ideal supported by the thought of the greatest poets and philosophers. The Traditions have it: 'God is Beauty and with Beauty is he well pleased.' Again, 'God has planted Beauty in our midst like a flag in the city,' sang Al-Shabistari. The great Ghazali wrote, 'The heart of man has been so constituted by the Almighty that like a flint it contains a hidden fire which is evoked by music and harmony, and renders man beside himself with ecstasy. These harmonies are echoes of that higher world of beauty which we call the realm of the spirit; they remind man of his kinship to that world and produce human emotions so deep and strange that he is powerless to explain.' (Quoted by A. U. Pope.)

For a discussion of the nature of Muslim painting it would be worthwhile to have a rough plan of its development from earliest times. Very little miniature painting has survived from the first few centuries of Islam because of the perishable and slight nature of the article, but there is enough to show that an active school of miniature painters existed in Egypt in the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries. This evidence is provided by fragments of papyri which are preserved in the Archduke Raimer Collection of the National Library of Vienna. One of these is the picture of a horseman signed by an artist called Abu Tamin Haydara (tenth century). Historical evidence is also provided by Maqrizi in his book *Khitat* in which he tells us of the Caliph Muntasir's great interest in painting and of the contest which he held between Al-Qasir and Ibn Aziz, the latter from Baghdad, the former an Egyptian. Maqrizi also claims to have written a whole history of painters, which unfortunately has been lost.

The above evidence, however, is too meagre for drawing any conclusions about art styles and standards. It was in Baghdad under the Abbasids that Islamic miniature painting actually took its birth. Unfortunately, however, the only

surviving manuscripts containing illustrations belong to the early thirteenth century, just before the deluge of the Mongol invasion destroyed the whole edifice of this culture with the conquest of Baghdad in 1258. These illustrations are found in manuscripts of books on medicine and mechanics, but more interesting are the pictures made in the popular story books *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, and *Maqamat* by Hariri, of which there are many copies. Of the last in particular there is a remarkable copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale called Shefer's Hariri dated 1237, illustrated by Yahya Ibn Mahmud of Wasit or simply Wasti. It contains graphic and realistic pictures of contemporary Arab life, showing typical human characters and carefully drawn animals such as camels and horses. There are indubitable signs of Hellenistic influence in the facial forms, art conventions and drawing. The workmanship is crude but the effect is full of spirit and vigour. On the other hand the composition already shows those decorative tendencies which were to be developed later in our miniature painting, and the same decorative quality marks the treatment of the drapery. The palette, however, is drab though varied. These Mesopotamian painters may be said to hold the same place in our art as the Primitives of Italy in the art of Europe, but the former preceded the Europeans by about two centuries.

The cataclysm of the Mongol invasions for a while cut short the progress of the arts of peace in the Muslim world. When the dust had settled and the conquerors were conquered themselves by the culture of their subjects, we find the art of painting reviving in an entirely new region—namely Northern Persia, where the Mongol kings of Persia made their capital. Persian painting therefore begins late in the thirteenth century and no older examples than that are extant.

While so far the dominant influence on all our art had been from the West, namely Byzantium or Greece, now the tide flowed from the East, namely Central Asia and China, because these regions had been brought under the rule of one family

together with the Muslim Near East, Hulagu Khan ruling here and Kublai Khan there. Now, these wild nomads first saw the light of civilization in China which was their first conquest, and they developed a deep and abiding admiration for its culture. Of course cultural relations had already existed between China and the Arab countries because of the coming of Chinese trading vessels in the seventh century, and the going of Arab in the eighth and ninth. Moreover the Arabs were already under obligation to the Chinese for teaching them the art of paper making which was so highly developed by the Muslims. This was first done by a Chinaman taken prisoner by the governor of Samarkand (middle of eighth century) according to Tha'abli's *Lataif al Ma'arif*, quoted by Sir Thomas Arnold.

Under the Mongols Chinese art acquired the status of the classical and the ideal. We know that Hulagu imported a hundred families of Chinese artists and craftsmen to decorate his new capital, while a constant stream of art goods continued to pour in for the use of king and courtiers.

It is natural, therefore, that the landscape painting of the Yuan dynasty, which was flourishing at the time in China, should have exercised a strong influence on the new school of painting in Persia. These influences are not only very pronounced in the earliest manuscripts such as Ibni Bakhtishus' *Manafi al Hayawan* (*c.* 1297, Maragha) but they bequeathed permanent features to Muslim painting such as the floating cloud forms or 'tai', the fondness for pictures of birds and animals, particularly flying ducks; the rhythmic quality and flowing figures of men and women; the interest in landscape painted in subdued colours after the Chinese; and above all the calligraphic quality of the whole line work, which last was not so much borrowed as reinforced, for the tendency was already present, due to the similar relation in China and Muslim countries between drawing and writing.

Perhaps the most noteworthy work of this period are the illustrations of the Shahnama done in 1320 at Tabriz and

known as the Demotte Shahnama. This is the work of an unknown artist and its parts are divided up between many collections, public and private. The illustrations, which have been praised as superlative by competent critics, are done in the grand style, showing impressive processions and heroic deeds and dramatic situations. The spirited drawing, striking compositions, the strong emotion and the rich colouring, are notable features of the paintings and are well suited to the subject.

Among other important works of this period are the many copies of Rashiduddin's *Jami at Tavarikh.* For help in compiling this we know the learned author invited two Chinese scholars, who brought many books and much material with them that has obviously influenced the illustration work. Incidentally, the manuscript of this book which is partly owned by the Royal Asiatic Society and partly by Edinburgh University contains the earliest known pictures of the Prophet, eight in number.

The next great political revolution which came over the Muslim world was the conquests of Timur. While these brought untold destruction in their wake, they also led to most fruitful patronage of all arts and sciences, because the family of Timur was a highly cultured one. Not only did Timur himself gather poets and artists and scholars at his brilliant court in Samarkand, but his successors in Persia and Transoxiana and India continued to extend the same enlightened patronage to art and science.

No manuscripts have survived from Samarkand, but there are many from Shiraz which also was a great centre of culture in those times. Here were developed those qualities of the typical Persian miniature painting which were to have far-reaching effects on the Timurid and the Mogul schools alike. Timur's son Shah Rukh made his capital in Herat, and gathered round him a galaxy of brilliant artists and scholars, among whom was Khalil Mirza whose work when brought to

Jehangir so impressed and delighted him that in his Memoirs he hazards the guess that Behzad perhaps learned painting from Khalil.

As against the epic and dramatic subjects of the Mongol school, the favourite themes of this school were romances and mystic poetry, especially the works of Nizami and Hafiz and Jami. Among the most remarkable surviving manuscripts of this period are the Cartier Nizami or the Khamsa of Nizami in the possession of Louis Cartier of Paris; and the Gulistan of Sa'adi in the Chester Beatty Collection now in India House, London.

Characteristic features of this school are the delicately drawn small figures, decorative conventional landscapes with spongy hills and a special pattern of curves to symbolize water, and a high horizon. The colours are very varied and brilliant but harmonious. The atmosphere of the pictures generally is one of comparative calm as against the turbulence and bursting energy of the Mogul period.

Included in the Timurid period but outstanding and apart is the school of painting that was initiated at Herat under the patronage of Sultan Husain Mirza and his great Vizier, Mir Ali Sher Nawai. Here worked Kamaluddin Behzad, the greatest name in miniature painting, who has been compared to Raphael. They were contemporaries and died in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, but Behzad lived to be twice as old as Raphael, and exercised far greater influence on the art of his people. Not only did he influence the numerous artists at Herat who were his pupils and later became leaders of schools in other centres, as Muzaffar Ali and Mirak and Mir Sayyid Ali, but he also helped to found the Safavid School himself, for when Shah Ismail Safavi conquered Persia and established his court in Tabriz in 1510, he took Behzad with him.

Apart from the numerous spurious works attributed to Behzad, the most remarkable specimens of this great master's

work are in the Bustan of Sa'adi in the Royal Egyptian Library in Cairo, and in the Khamsa of Nizami in the British Museum. A wider richer palette and new livelier colour combinations are a feature of Behzad's work—especially the use of many shades of red and the contrasting of them with a green background. But the most outstanding contribution of Behzad was to figure painting to which he gave a livelier quality of action; and the faces to which he gave individuality. Also he was the first artist to raise portrait making to the status of an independent art as apart from book illustrations. Portraits of course had been made before in abundance and were very popular with the royal patrons of art, but it was Behzad who taught for the first time the drawing of true likenesses with personality and character in them.

The Safavid school developed during the sixteenth century, declined and then again showed renewed activity and life in the early seventeenth century under the influence of Riza Abbasi, and then petered out again during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the great exponents of this school were Sultan Muhammed, Director of the Royal Art Studios under Shah Tahmasp, and his teacher, Mirak, pupil of Behzad. These two artists mainly were responsible for developing the characteristic features of the Safavid miniatures, richly decorative, extremely refined and elegant in technique, sophisticated in subject and spirit. The influence of the sweet seductive mystic poetry of Persia, and the rather indulgent and æsthetic mystic philosophy, is dominant in these paintings. Dreamy idyllic scenes of feasting and love making in flowery gardens; foppish young cavaliers and thin lipped princesses; these are the sual subjects of Safavid painting. The cloying sweetness, the excessive ornateness, suggest a weakening of nervous fibre and are premonitions of the end. Riza Abbasi made a gallant attempt to revive painting in Safavid Persia, but with his death in 1645 the great art practically died there, although it continued to be practised.

The basic character of Muslim painting had been established in Persia before it ramified into Bukhara, Constantinople, Lahore and Delhi. While these later developments form a fascinating study, the field covered above is enough to provide a basis for some generalizations.

If realistic art may be said to have achieved perfection in Greece and Rome, then abstract art had its perfect flowering in Islam. This quality is a reflection of the Muslim mind which found fullest expression in architecture, the most abstract and non-representational of all arts, except perhaps music, with which too the Muslims found much affinity. In our carpets and tiles, fabrics and silver wares, there is the same use of geometrical patterns and floral interlaces and arabesque which shows the extreme form of the analytical tendency to abstract certain beautiful forms from real objects. This tendency is in evidence in our painting also though in moderation compared with purely decorative work. In any case what is noteworthy is the overriding importance in our painting of the overall pattern of lines and curves, and above all of the areas of colours. This quality is sometimes referred to in modern criticism as 'arabesque', which is itself a significant point, as it implies that this quality was a salient feature of our art, arabesque meaning in the Arab style.

Thus, the famous critic Di San Lazzaro, in his book *Painting in France 1905–50*, speaks of the element of arabesque pattern in painting:

'To-day Gischia, who is a rigorous and pure artist but not an abstract one, has the same problem as Magnelli, the abstract painter. It is a problem Delacroix foresaw (despite the many horrible pictures he was responsible for) when he spoke to Baudelaire of "Those mysterious effects of line and colour which, alas, are only felt by a few adepts: that musical and arabesque part which is everything—and for many people is nothing." Gischia does not set out to represent or imitate a fruit. He has assimilated the contribution of the Fauves and the

Cubists—and not in vain. For all that his work is not abstract, yet it is blocked in its space, enclosed in its canvas, it is not objective but is an object itself as much as the abstract monumental work of Magnelli.'

The beauty of our painting too will be clear only when it is viewed as intrinsically beautiful forms making an abstract design rather than as representation though the latter quality is also there. At the back of it is the realization that the harmony of a painting, by the very nature of the medium, must be based on a two-dimensional pattern, and hence all such things as solidity, depth and distance should be entirely ignored. Once the shapes of nature had been reduced to two-dimensional forms, according to certain conventions (for all art has conventions) the problem was to create significant forms and to 'block' them within the framework of the picture. This is the direction in which all modern art has been moving since the time of Gauguin, through Kandinsky and Matisse, to Alberte Magnelli, who have insisted upon the beauty of forms independently of their representational quality. The distribution of areas in our paintings if studied from the point of view of pure design is most remarkable.

In the use of colour again, the harmony sought is not of intermingling tones, or atmosphere, but of pure brilliant discrete areas of colour juxtaposed in patterns, that play one hue against the other and create a rich polyphonic symphony of colour. There is neither shadow nor aerial perspective, neither mingling of forms nor dimming and receding planes. All is equally bright and fresh and vibrant. It is a musical conception of painting, as Kandinsky used to say, in which plastic values are transformed into patterns of zones of pure colour, that glow like lustrous jewels. In fact, many pigments used by the old miniature painters of the Moguls have been discovered to be ground-up jewels.

The use of the line deserves separate mention. If the value of art lies in the unique emotional experience it provides, this

is achieved by exploiting the different shades and types of emotion that nature has placed in different lines and curves, colours and tones. Now, by and large, Eastern art is linear, while Western art is plastic. Eastern art exploits to the full the beauty, strength and emotional value of the line, independently of other charms such as those of colour. Muslim art, however, is distinguished from Chinese by the fact that here the emphasis on line is counter-balanced by the equal insistence on colour; while as we shall find, in Mogul painting, the line gradually loses its importance and colour begins to dominate.

The pre-eminent importance of the line in Muslim art is but natural as our painting is more or less a by-product of calligraphy. The honour in which the art of writing was always held among us, as the means of recording the Word of God, influenced all our arts, which exploited the beauty of calligraphic patterns. When manuscripts began gradually to be decorated with marginal patterns, and then floral designs and then even animals and men, shyly these ornaments crept into the main page and intermingled with the text as panels or just as a beautiful punctuation. Thus painting appeared as a handmaid of calligraphy and was led in by the calligraphers themselves. As such, developed painting too retained the calligraphic quality of which the writing always remained a beautiful reminder.

Again the fact that all our paintings were first made into carefully done drawings and colours were filled in later, provided excellent opportunity for exploitation of the beauty of line. This fact has led some critics to call these paintings coloured drawings but that need not be considered derogatory. The work of Matisse has been compared by Roger Fry to tapestry and the comparison brings out the twofold beauty of colour and design that mark Matisse.

Again, it has been observed justly by Sir Thomas Arnold that there is an air of impassivity and lack of emotional expression in the portraits of Muslim miniaturists. Even in



Page from MS. copy of the *Akbar-namah* illustrated by Basavan (outline) and Dharm Das (painting). Mogul school, late 16th century



Akbar inspecting a captured wild elephant. Mogul school,
late 16th or early 17th century

scenes of stirring activity and excitement, of joy or sorrow or terror, the faces are blank and expressionless. This is certainly a weakness if judged by the standards of an art which presents figures as studies in psychology and character rather than as significant forms, and effective pieces of drawing or painting. But do we condemn the portraits of Cezanne which certainly do not come up to these standards of character study, and whatever other artistic qualities they might possess, are in this respect as impassive and lifeless as our miniatures? In this connection the practice of the Greeks too should be remembered. Firstly, they did not believe in depicting action except in the moments of perfect equilibrium, as in the Discus Thrower; and the same belief in calm, poise and repose, told them that in art the expression of the passions was indiscreet and unlovely. 'The Gods admire the depth and not the tumult of the soul.'

In short, what Bracusi said of his paintings may well be applied to Muslim painting, 'Do not look for obscure and mysterious formulæ. It is pure joy that I give you. Look at them until you can no longer see them. Those who are closest to the Lord have seen them.'

# 10

# THE TREATMENT OF NATURE IN MOGUL PAINTING

## ERIC C. DICKINSON

*'Dans la personne de son nouveau protecteur, l'Emperor Jehangir, l'art Mogul possédait un admirateur passionné de la nature.'*
La Peinture Indienne: Ivan Stchoukine

*'History has magnificent strokes of chance.'*
History of Art: Elie Faure

IN the beginning the treatment of this visible world about us in the Western realistic style was a thing undreamed by the Mogul artist. This was not at all surprising since Humayun returning from his exile in Iran in 1555 brought a group of artists into India who had long followed the two-dimensional convention in vogue at the court of the Safavids at Tabriz.

In order that we should more fully appreciate the significant change that overtook Mogul painting a little later in the Akbar period in the search after verisimilitude it is necessary that for a moment we turn aside to elucidate briefly the *raison d'être* of the Iranian *Kalm* as practised by the masters of the Safavid school.

Its aim was purely decorative and any naturalistic aids such as shading or perspective could have no place. It submitted the surface of the miniature to a kind of chequer-board treat-

ment resulting in a polychromatic effect of brilliant reds, greens, blues, and yellows, the whole glistening with the appearance of mosaic. Each division constituted an area of pure colour untouched by any shadow but covered with a wealth of architectural and other delicate detail. Under a canopy of clouds, spiralled after the Chinese manner, against an emerald-green ground, in high-peaked turbans, the princes walk into a fairy land of day's perpetual meridian amidst a garnishing of vermilion, lapis-lazuli, and gold. Said a nostalgic medievalist, speaking of the Gothic missal, 'The very lack of plasticity was the means of achieving an almost magic vitality. How unspeakably much was lost when perspective, imposing its triumphal illusion of three-dimensional form, destroyed the truth of the miracle.' Without changing a word we may equally lament the loss of the Safavid miniature. But, as we shall see, the Mogul artist came and substituted another miracle.

From Tabriz, Humayun brought with him Mir Sayyid Ali and Khawajah Abdus-Samad, two pupils of the famous Behzad, most famous ornament of the Safavid school. He allotted them a task. They were to prepare an illustrated copy of one of Iran's most attractive classics, the *Dastan-i-Amir Hamzah.* As the task was to be a tremendous one—twelve volumes, of one hundred folios, each to be provided with an illustration—the two master artists joined with them some fifty Iranian and Indian assistants.

With the beginning of the *Amir Hamzah* we may place the inception of the Mogul school. But when we come to compare the illustrations of the *Amir Hamzah* with the work of the Iranian miniaturist, points of difference are at once discernible. The Iranian *décor* remains, but the compositional skill is at times fumbling and uncertain, as though the often elaborate subject-matter had proved beyond the artist's powers so that the result is confused. Colouring has also lost something of its previous impeccable taste. But what is important for us

is that in the treatment of trees and other accessories there appears a new naturalism.

We must remember that just now we are not confronted with the detached miniature but with book-illustrations executed on cotton-cloth measuring some 22 inches by 28¼ inches. Let us look at an illustration from the *Amir Hamzah* which bears the title of 'The Miracle of the Prophet Elie'. The compositional axis is a diagonal. This the artists of the Akbar period had found very convenient to their purpose whose subject-matter was mostly concerned with the stirring chronicles related in the *Babarnama*, the *Timurnama*, *Akbarnama*, or the fabulous adventures of heroes of romance. In this instance we find it is used with quieter but quite telling effect. The treatment, however, of the water and the trees affords evidence of startling innovation. No longer are the trees treated *en masse* as in the Iranian *kalm*, and the foliate forms, though rendered flat, and restricted to well-defined areas of space which they completely fill, succeed in establishing each tree's botanical identity. But the most naturalistic treatment is reserved for the trunks. The artist too has not just been content to present his rocks in the manner of the Iranian and Chinese conventions, but with the aid of a minimum of shading he has given them a plasticity totally foreign to the Safavid miniature. The decorative intention still remains but guided by ideals unknown to the artists of Tabriz. The water too bubbles and foams realistically against the oriental traditional precedent of interlaced hatching. The Safavid ideals are disappearing. To what extent we can see by comparing the above work with 'Leila and Majnun' by Mir Sayyid Ali. This keeps well within the limits imposed by the two-dimensional.

The year 1575 marks the commencement of a notable phase in the evolution of the Mogul school. Akbar conceives the idea of establishing what is little less than an academy of art where Muslim and Hindu artists should find equal favour. The Safavid supremacy, already on the decline, is now hastened

towards a final disappearance. In the picture 'Timur Receiving Turkish Prisoners' from a Timurnama, and attributed to Dharm Das, the qualities of the new Mogul style are already apparent—a synthesis of Iranian, Hindu, and European. The figures are no longer stereotyped as in the 'Leila and Majnun' painting but betray a psychological interest on the part of the artist combined with a sense of drama. Accessories like architecture and drapery are handled with the skill of things freshly seen. Only the cartouche—here most tiresomely outsize—mars the dignity of the whole. The immobility of most of the figure groups is artfully relieved by the feverish activity in the foreground of two attendants with a tame cheetah, who perhaps has decided not to be so tame.

The growth of interest in architectural *décor* is rather overelaborately illustrated in the scene, again from a Timurnama, 'The Muezzin's Call to Prayer'. It is a pity the artists, for there are two contributors, decided to fill up every bit of their given space. This mars what would otherwise have been a most attractive painting with a quite Arabian-Nightish feeling in which the note of satire is not lacking, since despite the strenuousness of the *muezzin*, the somnolence of his audience finds no abatement. Some of the properties of the Iranian miniature are here too, but there is much more that carries with it the imprint of the new school's way of seeing the visible world. The planes of the buildings are made to advance and with a careful regard to perspective thereby avoiding the flimsy appearance of a theatrical *décor*.

Before the close of the Akbar period the introduction of examples of the work of Western painters caused an immense stride to be made in the realistic interpretation of nature. Two things could not have escaped the keen scrutiny of the Mogul artist about the European paintings: their balanced unity; and a carefully calculated colour-harmony in support of a prevailing tonality. But this was not all: these paintings had brought home to him the place of landscape. For the first

time they beheld it as one of the most prized of essential accessories.

In a miniature, painted by Basavan, he gives plasticity to his figures, atmospheric effect to his scene, as well as perspective. Almost, landscape, in this instance, has usurped the major for the subsidiary role and has become the painting's *raison d'être*.

We are confronted with a most daring excursion into realism. Its degree may be better realized when we learn that Basavan was a pupil of Abdus-Samad. There is no question as to the extent he has freed himself from Iranian conventions beloved of his master.

The Mogul portrait painter was the most prominent in taking advantage of the new appeal and placed his subjects against attractive landscape backgrounds often contrived with a true understanding of nature. But the greatest triumph of the realistic approach is the 'very beautiful conception' of 'Shooting the Deer at Night'. The original is one of the most prized possessions of the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Exigencies of space preclude my praising it further, though I am strongly tempted.

Under Jehangir a specialized school of miniaturists grew up whose task was the meticulous rendering of birds, beasts and flowers. The most accomplished among them was Ustad Mansur. One of Jehangir's favourite flowers was the tulip, judging from that delightful phrase he has found to describe them in the pages of the *Tuzuk-i-Jehangiri*, 'Torches of banquet-adorning tulips.' The gem among the paintings of this group is 'Red Tulips' by Ustad Mansur. A great admirer of tulips was D. H. Lawrence, who could declare, 'The tulip in her utter redness has a touch of the opaque earth.' It is just this quality of opaqueness which Ustad Mansur has exquisitely succeeded in getting into his tulips. Among his bird studies his 'Turkey Cock' is a work of the most accomplished merit. It stands with tail outspread against a background of hardly more

than suggested landscape, whose tonality reflects the aridity of desert sands, but which serves as admirable foil for the subtle colour gradations of the bird's plumage and the daring calligraphic red splash of his head and neck. For his proficiency in a highly specialized subject-matter of the miniaturist Jehangir conferred upon Ustad Mansur the title of *Nadir-al-Asr*, or Marvel of the Age.

The studies in *genre*, a further advance in naturalistic expression, are highly varied and make a humanistic appeal we find absent from gorgeous durbar scenes of stiff official ritual. They combine to form a social document of the life of the humbler class of beings, where, listening quietly, we may hear the eternal voice of the people. The list is imposing: visits of young princes to the retreats of *Pirs*; half-naked *sadhus* sprawling indolently beneath the spare shade of trees in abatement of the noontide travail; night scenes where *mullas* sit in learned debate; a musician and his audience this last, a masterpiece by Bichitr. The quotidian passage of events has enabled the artists—they are artist-poets—to snatch the significant and profound from the seemingly familiar and trivial. It was from the quintessence of this paradox was born that Far Eastern miracle in the art of *genre*—the Japanese school of *Ukivove*, or *Mirror of the Fleeting World*.

But exigencies of space, however, suggest it is time to summarize our conclusions.

In the beginning we have seen how nature in the inception of the Mogul school was completely under the tutelage imposed by the conventions of the Timurid and Safavid schools. How from this tutelage it emerged to find a new identity, in which indigenous and Western elements reciprocate, resulting in a synthesis, a synthesis in which the indigenous element, however, never forfeits its position of controlling power. But the stylization of nature finds no sudden and precipitate abandonment, and release from its trammels is only really accomplished when the artist has won himself confidence and ease in

his newly-established three-dimensional world. This confidence finds its highest degree of accomplishment in the reigns of Jehangir and Shah Jehan, the unaristocratic *genre* subjects particularly expressing a high degree of naturalism and humour. But even here shading is restrained and shadow excluded. Again the men who paint the animal, bird, and flower studies are not merely the possessors of a meticulous technique but see their subjects also with the poet's vision.

Finally out of his synthesis who can deny that the Mogul artist has forged for himself a splendid instrument, an instrument obeying the commands of the most powerful patrons whose chief delight is to have distilled and expounded the very quintessence of their colourful and animated *milieu*.

'History has magnificent strokes of chance,' says Monsieur Faure in his very impressionistic unfolding of art history. In few instances do we think the observation can be more applicable than in the case of superb zest for beauty, using a gift for the detection of everything exquisite in art as well as nature. They commanded; and to that 'magnificent stroke of chance' the artist put forth his luminous creations. To-day their glory remains undimmed and shines forth for us all to see who have the will to search, and are housed away in public and private treasuries maintained for our delight.

II

# ART IN PAKISTAN

JALALUDDIN AHMED

THE aim of this introduction to Pakistani painting is to discuss in some detail the prominent art trends and movements in this country, and to analyse any outstanding individual styles that are being evolved or acquired by our painters.

The art of painting has had its roots deep in this country, and though political history would not allow Pakistan to claim more than a few years of independent national existence—Pakistan came to be established in 1947—culturally her traditions go much farther back, into many centuries of artistic achievement.

The areas constituting Pakistan, being in closer geographical proximity, were the first to come into contact with the highly developed Muslim miniature painting of the thirteenth and subsequent centuries. Towards the middle of the sixteenth century, when Humayun, after years of exile in Safavid Iran, finally marched his triumphant armies into this sub-continent, he also brought in his train two distinguished Muslim artists—Mir Sayyid Ali and Khwaja Abdus Samad, both pupils of that great master, Behzad. The two joined with them a number of talented local artists who worked diligently throughout the Mogul rule, to constitute the school of painting known after the Moguls themselves.

The Mogul tradition in painting has since dominated the artistic scene of this sub-continent, with its stress on pure stylization of nature as well as the highly developed technique of realistic portraiture which flourished here for many centuries.

(This tradition continues to inspire and inform the meticulous and stylized work of Pakistani classicists like Chughtai, who form a link in the same tradition)

The existence of this tradition and its deep, healthy influence on the older generation of Pakistani artists, is very significant. Apart from preserving certain æsthetic and technical ideals, it also serves as a great stabilizing factor in our contemporary painting which is characterized by youthful enthusiasm and daring experiment. The majority of our artists are young men and women who are just feeling their way towards artistic expression. It is the adventure story of these young people that is even more fascinating than the triumphs of Chughtai's perfect colour compositions and his firm, confident lines.

As we view the contemporary artistic scene of Pakistan, certain facts emerge prominently. One of these is the great and unprecedented interest evinced by the ordinary educated young man and woman in the fine arts. This has led to a generous, appreciative patronage being offered to even the promising beginner in art. The result of this encouragement is that, compared with the small number of amateur painters that took to brush, palette and easel five years ago, to-day there are at least two to three hundred enthusiasts, professional as well as amateur, out of whom some at least are beginning to build what seems a lasting reputation.

Of course, financially painting in Pakistan, as in many other countries of the world, is more or less an 'honorary' profession, one that obviously does not pay. Even the more promising painters must often turn to commercial art, designing and cartoon-drawing for their daily bread. In spite of these difficulties, however, (throughout the country art exhibitions are held every other month) They range from one-man shows to group exhibitions, comprising Pakistani as well as foreign works. During the last four years, the Karachi Fine Arts Society—which is just one of a number of Art societies functioning in Pakistan—organized a dozen major exhibitions.

Their subjects ranged from the works of individual Pakistani painters, to Chinese rubbings, Canadian silk-screen prints, and modern British and Western paintings. The Dacca Art Group, led by Zainul Abedin, has held a number of exhibitions in Comilla and Chittagong besides three large exhibitions in Dacca, which brought together a wealth of works in water-colour, oils, tempera, charcoal and dry-brush, as also lithographs, woodcuts, dry-point and aquatint.

In Lahore, epicentre of cultural activity of all kinds, the progress has been no less remarkable. Besides the Mayo School of Art, which has produced artists like Chughtai, Muhammad Husain and Allah Bux, there is the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University which has made spectacular progress during the last few years. This is reflected in the increasing number of students and the rising standard of work done by them which has been exhibited from time to time. At their annual exhibition in 1952, more than two hundred selected works were hung, out of which about a hundred belonged to students themselves, and ranged from simple sketches to pastels, water-colours and ambitious oil paintings. Above all, there is the Pakistan Art Council, which is fast becoming the nucleus of a National Art Gallery.

This sudden awakening of interest in art could be easily anticipated as a corollary to the social and political revolution that culminated in Pakistan. This momentous event naturally fired the imagination of artists and spurred the ambition of youth to new endeavour. It is gratifying to note that while this cultural renaissance has deepened the consciousness of our past traditions, it has also broadened our outlook, so that our artists are looking for inspiration wider afield and are eager to learn from the artistic achievements of the West as of the East. Our art during these years breathes in the fresh air brought from everywhere, and though the individuality of the artist is given full play in subjects and themes which are specifically drawn from the soil, modern Western styles and techniques have been

sympathetically studied and judiciously incorporated in various ways.

Thus there are two broad groups—the term can of course be applied very loosely—among contemporary Pakistani painters. There is the elder group of veterans led by Chughtai, and broadly embracing such individual stylists as stand for tradition and academic manner: Fyzee Rahamin, who won laurels for his wonderful portraits and elaborate murals, Ustad Allah Bux, who is a master craftsman, Askari, whose oil portraits are a most sumptuous feast of colour for the eye, and Sheikh Ahmad, whose knowledge of the theory of Art is remarkable.

Among the younger group of painters we find a large number of daring experimentalists who are trying everything from flat compositions to the most difficult forms of abstractionist painting. There is Zainul Abedin who has recently adopted etching as a more effective medium than water-colour which has been his favourite medium for more than a decade now. There is Zubeida Agha, the most promising among our woman artists, who has gone over completely to abstractionist painting. There is Nagi who has fallen in love with colour, Sultan who paints vast landscapes, Safiuddin who has given us exquisite woodcuts, Ajmal who imparts a cartoonist's sharpness and exaggeration to his line and colour patterns, and Ozzir Zuby who is a painter as well as a sculptor.

It is against this background that Chughtai's stabilizing influence is all the more sharply felt and he has rightly been regarded as the most towering figure among Pakistani artists. Born in 1897, he comes from a family which 'for generations has produced architects, engineers, painters and decorators'. Some of the most famous architects of the Mogul period belonged to this family, and while his father wanted him to be an engineer, Chughtai himself went in for painting. His interest in art dates back to 1918 when he was only twenty-one. He did not have much by way of strict 'schooling' in art techniques, and even

his early association with Lahore's Mayo School of Art, was too brief to be really significant. He learned much more on his own while at Calcutta, and later during his visit to the United Kingdom and the Continent. But Chughtai was too much of a son of the soil to accept foreign influences, and he eventually went for his inspiration to the great Muslim tradition in painting which helped to produce the Mogul masterpieces in this sub-continent. As James Cousins has pointed out, 'Chughtai's conscious relationship to his art has never been narrowed down to an *ism* in either subject or technique. Not that he was æsthetically unintelligent. He had ideas—not mental notions or speculations, not any attitudinal claims of self-expression: but a deep sense of sharing in a mission for the discovery of the supreme achievement in creation.'

At one of his recent exhibitions held in Karachi, more than three hundred odd works were hung, mostly water-colours—a medium deeply enriched by Chughtai during the last thirty years of his actual life as painter. Some exquisite specimens of his pencil sketches and outline drawings were also on display. The exhibition attracted a large number of enthusiasts, including artists and art critics. Naturally enough, not all of them were equally appreciative. Divergent and vastly different views were expressed, but all were impressed by Chughtai's rich and powerful imagination, his superb draughtsmanship, and his exquisite colour-work. As the London art journal, *The Studio*, wrote some time back, 'Chughtai's work is not merely influenced by Persian painting of the past. It is an avowed rebirth of that art, with some recognition of modern progress, and the stamp of individual genius . . . There is an exquisite refinement of mood and method, a lyrical fervour in every line. Effects are economically achieved through concentration on the main theme of the picture.' That indeed is the secret of Chughtai's fatal charm—fatal to the critical faculties of the spectator—because there is something magical about the workings of his imagination, something phantasmagoric. There is seduction in

every turn and twist of his drunken reeling lines, as they entwine round one's heart; and finally the 'red, red wine' of his colours; they are the silken evening hazes shot with colour that make you too sentimental to judge rationally.

Chughtai has his own ideal which should be taken into consideration when he is judged. He depicts life through 'stills' as it were. He transforms the particular and the momentary into something universal and abiding.

Indeed, Chughtai revels in concentration in the sense that the moment depicted in the picture seems to epitomize the past and the future also. There is apparently no action in his pictures; all the figures are shown in repose, but there is a tenseness and a significant air about it which suggests that either something has happened or something is about to happen. He depicts just one moment that burdens his picture with a lot more meaning and thought than it can easily carry. Look at his portrait gallery. Here is a girl absorbed in adorning her eyes with *surma*, and the artist seems to endow the passing moment with eternity. There, a dancer, apparently unaware of her surroundings and herself, is caught in a posture as if in her ecstasy she would rise and evaporate, becoming part of the universal spirit of beauty. There, again, is the 'Daughter of the Harem', model of grace and dignity, symbol of an elevated mode of life that is no more. That is 'Rhythmic Water', with its luscious colour scheme, mingling the rhythm of figure-curves with the flow of water-currents, and harmonizing the two in an atmosphere which spells peace and quietude.

This meaningfulness and ideal grace found in his pictures is understandable. For one thing, Chughtai does not use models; not even for his character studies like 'The Reclining Nude', 'Young Ghatan' or 'Nasreen'. He draws and paints mostly from memory. The artist's scrap-book, in his case, is his own mind and imagination. This is indeed a double-edged weapon. While it gives freedom it also encourages idealization and exaggeration.

Chughtai is a great lover of nature, but he is a greater lover of humanity, of beauty that resides in the human form. He takes meticulous care in rendering the most intricate tapestries, carvings, garment borders, floor designs and so on, but his theme is humanity, 'My theme, and the main burden of my song,' as Wordsworth said. He sees nothing more beautiful than the human figure, nothing more expressive than the human face in the wide universe.

Though Chughtai is primarily a water-colourist, he is equally at home in pencil work and outline drawings also, while his etchings are so remarkable that a great artistic reputation might be based on these alone. The simple, effective use of lines and curves in his own free felicitous style has yielded such beautiful specimens as 'Flight', 'In the College Compound', 'More than Shadow' and 'Spring Breeze'.

As a critic writing in *The Artist*, of London, pointed out, 'Chughtai's whole outlook is romantic; he works, as do most Orientals, by rule of thumb rather than observations; he sees through the spectacles of his ancestors, rather than with his own unaided eyes. Everything he touches is a superb piece of craftsmanship. He has almost swaggering command of the brush so common to the Japanese and Chinese Masters; his handling is more akin to the neat and precise style of Persian and Mogul painters. He uses the pencil with the delicacy of silver point in style. The European student can learn much from his remarkable economy of means and material.'

Among Pakistani artists of to-day, Chughtai stands out as the creator of a separate school of painting. Not that Chughtai is too proud to learn; the progressive changes in his colour composition after his tour of Europe in the early thirties, the studied economy and strength of his line drawings, and the tremendous interest he showed in etchings, all indicate that he is most amenable to judicious criticism, and that he has all along brought an open mind to bear on the problems of art. But he knows that art is nothing if it is not individual, creative

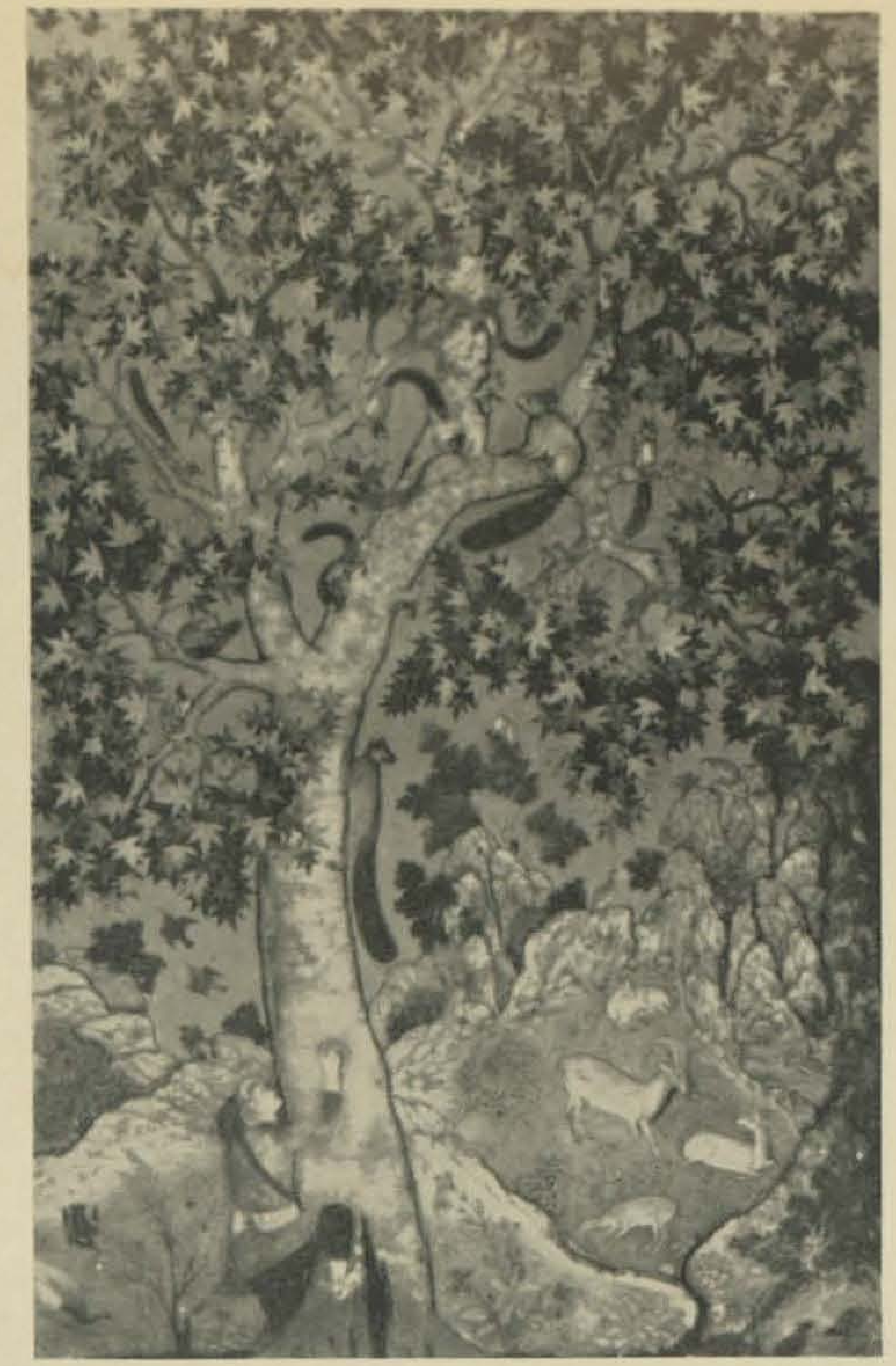
and original. And that precisely is the secret of his strength and stature as one of the greatest living artists of his time.

Chughtai's most renowned contemporary, Fyzee Rahamin, has also been greatly influenced by the Mogul traditions of art. But unlike Chughtai, he has had a thorough, orthodox education in the Western methods of painting, at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, and worked for a considerable time under Western masters, including the well-known portrait painter John Singer Sargent, with whom his own work was later compared. Unlike Chughtai, too, he has a freer, larger style, painting life-size portraits and ambitious murals, as well as elaborate landscapes and pictures with symbolical motifs. His remarkable Kashmir paintings, his symbolic depiction of the seasons—spring, autumn, winter and summer—and of abstractions like Justice, Peace, Power, and War, are remarkable works. These paintings are not at all lavish in the technical sense of the term: in fact they are extremely simple and bare, and even his oils are so subdued and thin that they give the impression of pastel or tempera. But the firm lines of steel in which he frames his picture combine strength with beauty in a way that only a master can effect; while the simple flat colours are so judiciously selected and applied that the effect could not have been more colourful and satisfying if all the colours of the palette had been lavished on it.

Fyzee Rahamin's earlier work mainly comprised portrait studies done in a Western manner so different from his later style that the spectator finds it difficult to believe the two have come from the same hand. 'Lady in White', 'Miss Gainsborough', 'Atiya Begum', 'Miss Catherine Hedges' and many other works all belong to this period, and won for him wide acclaim and recognition as one of the most powerful portrait painters of his time in the Western style. But as the artist grew in years and experience, he realized that art could not have individuality and freshness unless it belonged to the soil and exploited the social and cultural background of his



Falcon on a perch. Mogul school, about 1630–40



Chenar tree, hunter and animals. Attributed to Abu'l al-Zaman. Early 17th century



Raven addressing the animals. An illustration to a fable.
Mogul school, 1590

own people. He had to unlearn a lot before he fully grasped the significance of the cultural and artistic traditions of this sub-continent. Gradually he returned to indigenous themes like his type faces of 'A Tribesman', 'A Kashmir Craftsman', 'A Shaikh', 'A Musician', or his interpretative rendering of musical subjects like the 'Rag' series—Rag Megh, Rag Deepak, Bhairon, Ragni Gojri. Most finished examples of this period are his powerful studies of 'A Rajput' and 'Chand Bibi'. His superb handling of colour and effective figure-work in 'Chand Bibi' shows a mature technique as well as an imaginative sympathy with the subject and its full comprehension. It is these qualities which have given such charm and meaningfulness to his murals which still decorate the interior of the New Delhi Secretariat domes.

Fyzee Rahamin has spent the best part of his life painting and has succeeded in building up a reputation, both at home and abroad, which should be the envy of an artist anywhere in the world. His exhibitions have been held in Europe and America, at the Royal Academy, at the Gallery of George Petit in Paris, at Knoedler's Andersons, New York, and at the Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco. His works have been acquired by some of the world-famous galleries of London, Manchester and San Francisco. In spite of all this, Rahamin is a quiet, shy and modest old man, still eager to learn and teach, to take criticism and give it, to advise young students and make them conscious of the great traditions which they inherit. Recently, along with his wife Atiya Begum and Begum Nazli of Janjira, he has presented to the nation a museum, called 'Aiwan-e-Rifaat', which contains a priceless collection of paintings and art goods.

Three other artists who belong to the older generation of Pakistani painters are Ustad Allah Bux, Hasan Askari and Sheikh Ahmad. Of course they have little in common except that they are veterans in this field, have developed distinct styles, and are all traditionalists following the old academic ideals of art.

Allah Bux is undoubtedly the most prolific of them all, and is also the most senior in age and experience. He started his career very early in life and soon made a mark as a highly imaginative painter. His figure paintings are all allegorical or at least have a fictional interest; and his landscapes have a marked element of design and also a certain symbolical significance. His curious and complex compositions based on tree forms are particularly interesting; complex but still æsthetically satisfying. Allah Bux is an accomplished craftsman and, as one of his critics recently pointed out, the variety and piquancy of his media are infinite: water-colour diluted with milk, or thickly laid on and scraped with a palette knife; oil and water-colour mixed; poster, tempera and oils pure and simple. His subjects, too, 'have a wide variety ranging from faithful, carefully thought-out scenes from everyday life through the intricate composition of his enchanted woods, the colours jewelled in their intensity, the pattern alive and flowing, to the subdued rock and earth formations of a world of almost Blake-ish anguish, an underworld of deeply rooted beliefs and moral precepts.'

Professor S. H. Askari, who resigned from the Government School of Art, Lucknow, has travelled all over Europe and America and studied the rich art collections of those countries over a course of many years. He has illustrated books—like the Elegies of Anees; designed stained glass windows for a chapel; painted murals such as a huge painting of the great battle of Karbala for the Nawab of Rampur; modelled relief panels and statues; painted landscapes; but above all his fame rests on his work as portrait artist. Thus in the days of the British in India, he was commissioned to paint numerous portraits for the Viceregal Lodge and the War Office; and many of the ruling princes also were among his patrons. In Pakistan he has painted many remarkable portraits of the Quaid-i-Azam and also done a whole gallery of portraits of the Nawabs of Khairpur for the picture gallery of the

state. His work is all done in the good old academic style, with a wealth of detail, meticulous drawing, and carefully graduated colours and tones. The dark palette and the reposing harmonies differentiate his work from latter-day styles. Most noticeable is the nature of his æsthetic ideal—a delectable and somewhat dramatic kind of beauty. This makes him select such subjects as gorgeously dressed princesses, romantic scenes in a setting of fabulously adorned palaces; occasionally rustic belles as a poet would imagine them; great public dignitaries glimmering out of the dark panoply of their setting. As a corollary of the above, he lavishes all his care on the textural beauty of skins and stuffs, making them pretty and attractive. There is no hint of tragedy or bitterness or cynicism in his work. Everything is sweet and honied. It is a very different experience from that one gets from the paintings of these days generally.

Sheikh Ahmad, now in his forties, has had an interesting career, spending a number of his early years in the United States where he first started his study of painting. Later he went to Britain where he taught at the Central School of Art, before returning to Pakistan and working in the Mayo School of Art, Lahore. The strict schooling which he has had in draughtsmanship has given him that mastery in drawing which is the basis of success in art. His portrait studies have a rare technical finish, but perhaps his strength is best displayed in book illustration work which he has done for a number of publishers in England and America.

As has already been mentioned, these veteran artists represent the element of tradition, but not the contemporary trends. The Mogul tradition, both directly and through Chughtai and his class, are looked upon as part of a rich artistic heritage, but no one thinks that these styles are capable of fulfilling the demands of modern subjects, or expressing modern experiences. The speed and intensity of modern life, the complexity and many-sidedness of the modern world, the greatness of

modern events, whether heroic or monstrous, sordid or glorious, cry for a new approach in art. Our younger artists are answering this call. Just a glance at Zainul Abedin's 'In Search of Food', Zubeida Agha's 'Clifton Lights', Nagi's 'Expectation' or Qamrul Hasan's 'After the Cyclone', will convince anybody that it is a far cry from the serene, soothing paintings of Chughtai to these abrupt, startling and extremely intelligent interpretations of life made by our younger artists.

Zainul Abedin has the soft green and blue of paddy fields, lakes and rivers in his veins, and possesses an exquisite sense of colour and line rhythm. He has recently returned from a tour of Britain and the European Continent; and the exhibitions of his work held in London, Vienna and Turkey were very successful. He is best known for the remarkable collection of his brush drawings of the Bengal famine of 1943, which deeply impressed him. The horror of starving groups of human beings and of emaciated corpses surrounded by watchful ravens is dramatically caught in flowing brush strokes and by a variation of sensitive lines. Wrote Dr. Reiser, the well-known continental etcher and art critic who saw his work recently for the first time, 'Abedin has succeeded to an extraordinary degree in depicting the horrors of such scenes. No shading or washed-in planes were required to create an outstanding, artistic and human document. In some ways these drawings remind us in their dramatic effect, of some of Goya's etchings—although the volumes are entirely given here by the tension and variations of the brush lines. The influence of the great Eastern tradition of the pure line is distinctly visible in his work.'

These famine sketches also struck Eric Newton as 'brilliant drawings, combining the Orient and the Occident. He is capable of observing and of contemplating at the same time, and the tempo of the brush that never hesitates, yet is never flustered, is exactly right for the purpose. It is as though the Oriental hand, holding the brush in the traditional Oriental

way, and using nothing but fluent black ink and water on absorbent paper, had been guided by a European eye.'

Stark, bare, and bizarre, Abedin's famine sketches were the culmination of the earlier lessons in realism which he had learnt while painting his simple rustic scenes and figures. Sadness and introspection are discernible in his later work: but in paintings like 'Bengali Maiden' or the inspired 'Way to Quaid's Grave', he has shown remarkable restraint and poise. 'Here the need for urgency has disappeared,' wrote Eric Newton, commenting on his recent water-colours and oil paintings. 'There is no longer any need to force the pace of the brush. The water-borne vegetable market is a joyful, colourful sight, full of details bound together by the rhythmic sweep of the boats. Here the artist's faculty for composition is called into play; and here again, East is fused with West. The spacing of the main masses is Oriental; the observed fact is Occidental. Again and again the placing of each feature is reminiscent of Asia, yet the detail itself might have been drawn by an English water-colourist.'

Zainul Abedin, as has been so often remarked, is an astute draughtsman and with bare economy of line and the use of empty space, he succeeds in creating astounding effects, full of emotion and power. Perhaps it is this quality which attracts him more and more towards etching and away from oil. 'An artist who can draw like this, should etch,' wrote John Buckland Wright, adding, 'Abedin's drawings have the directness and power which is inherent in all good etching. I believe that with dry-point, etching, soft-ground and sugar aquatint his already considerable means of expression will be greatly increased and will provide him with enormous benefit of the quite secondary advantage of etching: that of multiplication. Etching will give him the far wider public which he deserves.'

Safiuddin Ahmad is another promising painter whose work has been seen abroad, in London, Paris and Singapore. As a growing artist, he believes in the ever-widening scope which

new techniques always bring. Like Zainul Abedin, he has also been experimenting in new media, and his subtle, effective use of aquatint and dry-point has given him remarkable control over line. While some of his paintings like 'Uplands' and 'Santhal Market' do not completely succeed in recapturing the full colour and rhythm of life, his brush sketches, woodcuts, and etchings seem to have amazing depth and meaningfulness. His recent works, like 'Portrait of Wazir Ali' (dry-point), 'Golden Corn' and 'Way Through Jungle' (woodcut), show a rare strength, and the final effect is that of an abstract composition of a very high quality. 'Santhal Girls', 'Journey's End', 'The Blue Drapery', 'Through the Trees' and 'On the Way to the Fair', are some of his other outstanding studies. Seeing his work together in a composite exhibition, one gets the impression that there are certain details which recur, reminding us of the details in Zainul Abedin's sketches. Safiuddin's primary interest lies in technique: he seeks avenues for fuller self-expression and the theme is relegated to a secondary place.

Unlike Safiuddin, Anwarul Haq has been concentrating on portrait painting and though he has used water-colour for his studies of boats and river scenes, he is most at home in oils—portraits or still-life. His 'Cactus' and 'Portrait Study' are good examples of his colour work, and his impressionistic treatment. His composition is comparatively weak, but the choice of unusual subjects and the strange setting in which he paints them tend to make the viewer completely oblivious of the defects of his composition. His bold oil study 'Cactus' is a brilliant example of his use of colour variations and the effect of 'solidity' which he achieves by setting a lone cactus plant against the vast expansiveness of a fading horizon.

The work of Qamarul Hasan is marked by the economy of lines with which he succeeds in imparting life to his sketches; 'Five Lines in Brush' and 'The Cobbler' owe their force and strength to the ruthless elimination of all unnecessary detail,

and to the bold sweeping brush-work. His more finished studies, like 'After The Cyclone', 'Waiting', and 'Mother', are realistic and thoroughly typical of the land and people which they represent and to which they belong.

Khwaja Shafique Ahmad has tried charcoal and lithographs for his charming head studies, mosques and waterfalls, but for his more elaborate works like 'Arakan Hills' and 'A View from Chittagong' he takes to water-colour. Shafique Ahmad is essentially a designer, but his paintings give the impression of a certain roughness. It is only after some time and reflection that the real spirit behind the sinuous lines and rambling pattern is discernible.

A. S. Nagi has made his mark above all as a painter of portraits—portraits of beautiful faces, colourful subjects, happy moods, romantic scenes. His work is very earthy and corporeal, if not carnal. The world of idea and philosophy is far away from him; he revels in form and colour. The study of the human form divine, with all its frank appeal of flesh and blood, is the 'main region of his song'. He has no theories of art and is little affected by new movements. All he seeks is beauty of line and colour in the most commonly accepted sense of the word, slightly sensuous, slightly romantic. Anything colourful and gay draws him irresistibly: fabrics, flowers, clouds, waters! And he paints them with great abandon and gusto. His recent visit to Paris and his stay at Beaux-Arts there has introduced him to the secrets of modern colour techniques and gives a new freedom and life to his drawing.

S. M. Sultan, who has recently returned from the United States after a study tour, is essentially a landscapist with a special feeling for colour and he has chosen idyllic scenes from Kashmir and Bengal for the majority of his paintings. Born and bred amidst strife, Sultan craves for peace: and he finds it only in nature, in deep waters 'stilled at even', in timeless mountains and valleys, in the carefree poise of trees and the transparent expansiveness of boundless fields. He contrasts

this 'inner peace' of nature with the struggle and strife which is the essence of human life. Sultan speaks with pride of his ambition to make nature more natural, to add more of autumn to autumn, more of spring to spring. Sultan is a diligent student deeply interested in modern as well as classical art movements. He is a lover of Constable, and in some of his best works, like the idyllic 'Bamboo Bridge in Bengal' and 'Trees', he certainly achieves the perfect, refreshing results of that great English master.

Ajmal Husain began his career as a cartoonist, and the temptation to distort, exaggerate and artificially heighten the effect comes naturally to him. Whatever his means, he does succeed in giving a certain vivacity to his pictures. Even his still-life studies are surcharged with a certain restlessness and inherent motivity. Like many other artists of his generation, Ajmal's draughtsmanship still leaves much to be desired, and there is yet a long way for him to tread before he wins the right to indulge in those liberties which attract him in the modern masters. But Ajmal has one great quality: he is patient and diligent, eager to learn and improve, to adapt and adjust. Slowly but steadily he is working his way up among the front-rank painters of this country where he is bound to find a place. His recent exhibitions on the Continent were well received and his contacts with the West have given him brilliant new themes and fresh techniques.

Mubarak Husain is another of our artists whose angles of vision are always slightly unexpected and therefore arresting. His eye picks out cool green spots, lagoons, glistening harbours and such delectable scenes that are a pleasure to watch and make one yearn for outdoor life. His treatment of these subjects has changed from the soft-graded tones and gentle contours in the beginning, to more vigorous treatment in oblong patches of colour in his recent work.

Zubeida Agha, who can rightly claim to be one of the few women abstractionist painters, has exhibited her work in

Pakistan as well as abroad—in London and Paris. Some of her work appears at first glance to have been executed in a rush of impetuosity; but the fact is that whatever she does, she does slowly and deliberately. She seeks to achieve vivid personal expression of an imaginative state which is yet to find its precise equivalents in terms of line and colour. She insists that her paintings are not symbols; neither does she paint what she calls the 'embodiment' of ideas—a face, figure, land or sea-scape. She goes directly to the 'idea' itself, the idea of love, hate, beauty, motion, and the like, which is universally understood. And she paints the idea as she comprehends it. Indeed she has travelled to art through philosophy rather than through poetry and emotion. The coldness of her work is thus understandable. Her subjects are abstract, as 'Youth', 'Wisdom', 'Creation', 'Future'; being themselves abstract, they could best be expressed in pure, abstract form. In her superb representation of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, for example, there is a strange and mystifying comprehension of the essence of the whole musical piece, and its expression in a plastic, almost architectural mould. We are not at all surprised when she tells us that while working up innumerable preliminary sketches, she played over the record four times a day for two months, in order to achieve this highly imaginative representation!

Another outstanding abstractionist painter is Shakir Ali. He does not invent bizarre forms to express certain preconceived ideas, because he knows that is not the process of artistic creation. He rather contemplates objective reality and draws from it not only the pure abstract forms but the emotional content which centuries of human association have imparted them. Shakir never abandons this source of strength; he keeps his feet firmly planted on the earth. But with what a giant grip he grapples with reality to make it yield its secrets! The apparent is pulverized and wrung out of shape, as the real and the significant is drawn out cunningly and masterfully by the artist.

Abstract art has attracted many other young artists: among

them are Haneef Ramay, Ahmed Pervez and Safdar Ali. Ozzir Zuby, who made his mark as a highly realistic sculptor, has also tried his hand at abstractionist painting, and it is the pure sculpturesque quality of his work which primarily interests the viewer.

An interesting aspect of the renaissance of art in Pakistan is that a large number of women painters have come to the fore, showing a keen interest and, in many cases, unusual promise. Zubeida Agha, who has already been mentioned, is, perhaps, the best known of them all, and the most prolific and brilliant. Razia Serajuddin is another senior artist, perhaps the most senior among women painters of this country. She chose oils for her earlier portraits, but soon changed over to watercolours, a medium which she has deeply enriched during the last fifteen years.

Anna Molka Ahmed is Head of the Department of Fine Arts in the Punjab University and has collected round her a group of women enthusiasts to whom she is a constant source of inspiration. Herself a considerable painter in oils, she has to her credit some delightful life studies as well as abstractionist compositions like 'Shock', 'The Cousins' and 'Sunset'. Among her most promising students are Nazratun Naim Farooqi, Zakia Dil (now Zakia Mullick), Anwar Afzal, Razia Feroz, Nasim Qazi, and Tasnim Mazhar. Nazratun Naim Farooqi, who was conducting the Karachi Sketch Club until she went on scholarship to study modern art in the United States, is a realistic painter, and has done plenty of work in oils as well as water-colours during the last four or five years.

That, then, is the beginning: modest but hopeful. The heritage of a rich tradition is there; the results of Western experiments in technique and communication are there; there also exists the requisite atmosphere of sympathy, talent, and the inherent urge to create, to express, to feel and to communicate. And if the work done during the brief span of a few years is any indication of what is to come, painting in Pakistan certainly has a great future.

# 12

# THE URDU WRITER OF OUR TIMES

## A. S. BOKHARI

WHEN Iqbal joined his ancestors in 'the undiscovered country' eleven years ago, a number of friends, from centuries far and near, gathered round him. Ghalib and Mir were there, and Hali and Shibli and Girami, and also Naziri, Rumi and Hafiz—and the conversation flowed freely. There were a few awkward moments, of course. The learned discussion on the Self, with Rumi, every now and then soared above the heads of the rest, and during Iqbal's monologue on the Destiny of Nations, Ghalib, alas, was heard to snore. But, on the whole, things were remarkably easy. There was much reading aloud, from books or from memory, of well-known passages, and wit and wisdom were happily intermingled through the timeless days and nights. There were many controversies and not all of them were resolved. But even the deadlocks discovered new and exhilarating patterns of understanding. Iqbal was not of the Ancients, and yet to the Ancients he did not appear as a stranger, only as something rich and strange.

How would a young Urdu writer of to-day fare in this company, were he to be hastened upon the journey before his time? He would, I am sure, be received with courtesy and with affection but he would also, I fear, feel somewhat lost. Communication with the Ancients would not be easy. The new arrival would find a great gulf between him and his predecessors and would plan long visits to the Elysian library to bridge it. For the circumstances of his life here have made

it difficult for him to inherit his due share from his forefathers. There are, no doubt, exceptions. Rashid and Faiz, Firaq and Farhatullah Beg, Josh and Hafiz—all these are on good terms with yesterday, although all of them in varying degrees have thrown in their lot with to-day or to-morrow. But they seem to be a dwindling minority, the last of their race which will be reborn one does not know when. For the majority of our writers of to-day, the links with tradition are quietly snapping. Maulvi Nazir Ahmad, the novelist of fifty years ago, quoted the Prophets with reverence and the Poets with distaste; his villain quoted the Prophets with distaste and the Poets with relish. But both author and villain could quote. Both had inherited a common body of literature which was clearly inventoried in the mind of the age. The Urdu novelist of to-day would share with his hero only the inability to quote. He is a voracious reader but Spring Lists, Autumn Lists and Overseas Editions follow each other in such quick succession that there is no time to sort out or to read twice. The curriculum of our times is confused. Least of all is there the urge to look back. To the Urdu author of our times belongs the future, perhaps; but not the past.

The causes which contribute to this dissociation are varied and complex. As a first analysis, one may entertain the idea that the system of education under which the author was brought up did not give him a fair deal. During the last fifty years or so, formal education has veered away from the old ideal of urbanity and/or piety which sought to equip the student for this world and/or the world hereafter with the help of the Poets and the Prophets in the proportion required. But the old certitudes have disappeared, along with their Prophets and their Poets. That is the one thing that the change in our educational system has definitely achieved. For the rest, our education, these many years, has been a series of experiments or rather gropings for a new ideal which should suitably replace the old. And the groping still goes on.

This, however, would not be the whole truth. The ultimate reasons lie deeper and could perhaps be traced to the rapid and vast expansion of the world in which the author, along with the rest of his generation, now finds himself. For, this half century has been a rapid melting away of dykes and breakwaters. Traditional values were useful as long as the community which they sustained and stabilized preserved its contours. The contours are now fluid and unstable and are spreading out as the contours of oil spread out on the surface of the water. To the old community he can now no longer belong, for the old community is gone. Instead, he finds himself in a new and expanding community, to which he must one day belong if he is not to be adrift for ever. The new community is not yet defined in his mind. He does not fully comprehend it, but he has already found out that the previous generation did not fit him for it. Many things from the past stand in the way of achieving a satisfying life in the new world; and so, away with the past! The great urge of his generation therefore is to rebel against custom, against authority, against police, against parents, to turn away from the Prophets and the Poets. In fact, turn away from everything that is reminiscent of the umbilical cord. The battle is sometimes a little confused, the points of the compass occasionally get mixed up. But, then, all battles are like that.

For the Urdu writer, the break with the past has involved at least one great sacrifice—it has at one stroke deprived him of a vast collection of words and allusions, of myth and symbol which provide the writer-craftsman with his subtlest and most useful weapons. For, words are not mere noises or scribbles which if lost can be easily replaced. They embody the psychological observations and emotional experiences of those who have gone before us. Each of them is a line discovered in the spectrum of human experience. If a line of the spectrum is lost, we cannot just draw another instead. We have to discover it all over again. The author of to-day has, therefore, not only

to find new names for new things; he has also set himself the task of identifying and naming things that have been known and felt before. By this renunciation he has imposed on his creative self a strain which has increased the difficulties of his craft enormously. This perhaps explains why we sometimes find him at once acute and crude, direct and involved, inarticulate with many things on the tip of his tongue. Words that he betrayed are now betraying him. Denison Ross, knowing that living language embodied a national store of quotation and allusion which every educated individual acquired and from which he drew to lend colour and emphasis to the spoken and written word, tried to sketch the background of the English language in a book published a few years ago. In it, under the heading, 'Literary Quotations', he included the Authorized Version, Shakespeare, Nursery Rhymes; under 'English Tradition', Popular Titles of Famous Personages, Festivals, Famous Advertisements. And there was a section on 'Stock Phrases'. How easy would it have been, fifty years ago, to describe the physiognomy of Urdu along these lines! How difficult to-day!

This is not the Urdu writer's only difficulty. There is also his bilingualism, and what a formidable handicap that can be when the two languages are so widely different from each other as English and Urdu! Scholars and educationists will explain to us with many unanswerable arguments from history and experience, what a great boon it is for anyone to know two languages. Internationalists will point out how every foreign language acquired is twice blessed, blessing the country that gives and the country that receives. And no doubt they would be right. For, every new language is another window in the mind, and perish all that fears the light! For the majority of mankind this would have no painful after-effects, but the writer, alas, has to do more than have a mind like a well-lit room. He has to communicate. What is more, he has to communicate in only one language at a time. Now, whatever the number of languages that have fed his mind, he has only one

mind. One window is green, the other red, but in the mind the two colours do not lie snugly side by side, each distinguishable from the other. They mingle and form a third colour which is perhaps a little more green near this window and a little more red near the other, but which is after all neither green nor red anywhere. He could revel in this mysterious and subtle light and feel the richer for it, but how difficult to pour it back through a filter which is only green or only red, and yet not falsify the colour. In a sense it would be true to say that a bilinguist can never speak his mind unless he speaks in the two him to give you, not half a mind—that would be an impossibility—but a mind that is only half articulate and constantly each other. But confine him to one language and you force him to give you, not half a mind—that would be an impossibility—but a mind that is only half articulate and constantly out of tune with expression. And yet that is exactly what the Urdu writer of to-day has to do. In the texture of his writing, you will see curious twists and turns, obscurities and frustrations, and worst of all, curious English phrases so thinly or clumsily clad in Urdu that only the bilinguist will understand them. Language here ceases to be a subtle weapon, dexterously handled by the craftsman. It becomes a series of approximations, a gesture code. Words do not carry their meaning within them. The meaning lies outside of them and the words point to it from a distance with a thick finger. If he feels unbearably thwarted, he stops being an Urdu writer and in despair takes to English instead. But whether he substitutes the red filter for the green or the green for the red, the problem remains.

We noted earlier that our writer found himself in a new community to-day—a sprawling community yet undefined—but bigger and more complex than any his predecessors had known, to which, for dear life's sake, he must needs adjust himself to achieve fullness and stability. We should not be surprised therefore, while the adjustment is yet incomplete, to

find him seized with the restless energy of the lonesome person determined to find congenial company or make it. It is a symptom of this desperation perhaps, that the writers of to-day are ever ready to try any associations or affiliations that promise to dispel their loneliness and to keep on writing prefaces and forewords to each other's books. Seldom before did our writers manifest such a strong tendency to hold each other's hand, to form Societies, Anjumans, and Circles, as earnest and almost fanatical essays in community-building. In terms of creative energy, a writer has to pay a heavy price for such explorations and wanderings, but our writer seems to have resigned himself to this. His aim, though dimly perceived, is the achievement of a full life; and, being dispossessed, he must do a great deal of house-hunting first. But while he is house-hunting, the business of living itself has to be frequently postponed. He is a young root in search of a soil, but how keep the vital juice circulating till the soil is found?

In a speech delivered at the Seventeenth International Congress of the P.E.N. Club, Arthur Koestler told us how Turgeniev could write only with his feet in a bucket of hot water under his desk, facing the open window of his room. The hot-water bucket, Koestler said, stood for inspiration, the creative source; the open window for the world outside, the raw material for the artist's creation. He pointed out that the strongest temptation which the world outside exerted on the author was to draw the curtains and close the shutters. But there was also a temptation number two, in which the action of the open window was experienced not as pressure but as suction. The writer was tempted not to close the shutters but to lean right out of the window, taking his feet out of the hot-water bucket.

So great is the need for our Urdu writer for comprehending the events in the street, in other words for vision and focus, that we should be prepared to find him too frequently at the window and, fascinated by the spectacle outside, even shouting



"The Miracle of the Prophet Elie." An illustration by Mir Sayyid Ali
from the *Amir Hamzah*. 16th century



"Zubeida Khatoon", a good example of the highly wrought work of Chughtai



"Sisters" by Zainul Abedin

and declaiming and not returning to the desk for days and letting the hot water grow cold. But a new world has burst upon him. There are so many things to watch and understand, so much raw material to sort out. It would be somewhat exacting, therefore, to expect great works of art from him, to expect that he will not frequently be tempted to join the crowd in the street rather than keep his feet in the hot water. But as the main contribution of his generation to the fellow-craftsmen that will come after him, he will give you seriousness of purpose and the courage to look ahead and journey into the future—if possible with the blessing of his forebears; if necessary, without. He is keen, aware, restless and desperate—determined to find the new path and travel on it, indifferent to what he may drop on the way. We cannot pay him greater homage than to understand his difficulties and limitations, his pains and penalties, in order the better to appreciate his struggles and achievements. This is what I have here attempted to do.

# 13

# THREE ENGLISH NOVELISTS AND THE PAKISTANI SCENE

BENJAMIN GILBERT BROOKS

An impartial survey of Anglo-Indian fiction is apt to be excessively depressing. The subject forms a part of English literature, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say of the English literary output, but practically all the material, even the most ambitious and effective, remains incorrigibly on the edge of things. The books recorded have mainly the quality of raw material for socio-economic or cultural research, which characterizes much of the novel even in metropolitan areas. They are written in second-rate styles for the most part, by people with no primitive urge either to create or write, people who are seeking out the sort of characters and situations which had appealed to the readers of their own so different cultural environment, dressing them in fancy costume for the pleasure of untrained and provincial-minded exiles, whose all-pervading nostalgia makes them even less worthy a public than they might have been had they been appealed to by some direct or naked attack on their sensibilities.

It is a phenomenon, in its main outlines, at which we need not be surprised, once we realize how many literatures have presented it before. All the older vernacular literatures which sprang to life on the soil of what had been the Roman Empire, all the newer literatures which during the past three hundred years have been differentiating themselves from their parent stock of English, provide examples. Of the latter, the American

has reached the stage at which a tone, a phrasing, a word-stress, and through these the differences of meaning and spirit, are discernible. The same has almost come to be true of the Australian, has long ago made itself out to be true of the Irish, and to some extent is coming to be the case with the Welsh, Canadian and South African. All these have progressed beyond Pakistan, in challenging a place with the English-speaking literatures of the world, not merely apologetically, but with the firmness of the experimentalist whose native vigour has given him the confidence of being in complete control of himself, so that he is no longer compelled to seek the suffrages of another, and to him foreign, literature.

Anglo-Indian fiction would seem to take us far from Pakistan, which has on the whole attracted rather less of the novelists' attentions than other parts of the sub-continent. But those attentions have, in compensation, been perhaps markedly more understanding. The three writers with whom I propose to deal have seen their subject as a section of the full Indian picture, and all are, to a greater or less degree, peripheral, in the sense that they have not sought out their own pattern, but have all felt the need to conform to some accepted pattern of the novel already prevalent in their day. Indeed, Rudyard Kipling in his short stories and in *Kim*, Mr. E. M. Forster in his *A Passage to India*, and A. E. W. Mason in his *The Broken Road*, bear perhaps the same relation to the spontaneous and truly expressive Pakistani novel of our dreams as Washington Irving and Dickens, the native and the foreigner respectively in relation to the U.S.A., do to Walt Whitman, or to the Hermann Melville of *Moby Dick*. Washington Irving conforms to the pattern of the Addisonian essay, Dickens follows that of his own Pickwickian novel. The three English writers on Pakistani themes whom I have just named work along the same lines, in terms of contemporary European writing.

Rereading their works recently after my first direct contact with Pakistan, I must say I find myself as disappointed with

Kipling as I expected and feared, surprised at being so favourably impressed with the really very unpretentious Mason, and even more surprisingly dissatisfied with the one towards whom I had been, until coming out here, the most sympathetically inclined. All three belong to different epochs and literary strivings. All three, unavoidably in the case of the last two but scarcely so with Kipling, show how inevitable it is that a writer should impose on the confusion of impressions he receives from a new land into whose contours he can have very small insight, the pattern current in his own milieu and epoch. It depends very much on the quality of the reader's own mind, the sensitiveness of the world in which he has shaped that mind, and the receptiveness of the audience which he is preparing to address, whether the work of art gives him a feeling of truthfulness. All three of the novels under discussion stand on different levels in this matter.

Kipling reacted first from within to his chosen environment, since he was born in the sub-continent. It is amazing therefore how little he seems to know of it, even when his vision is examined through the eyes of a comparative newcomer. We in England are very apt to think of his Indian tales as filled with authentic touches, even when we admit, as is usual nowadays, that he was wrong and cheap in his interpretation, and that his genius found a better field of action in the later tales of his own people. He was more fundamentally wrong about India than we had even dared to think, even after the corrective supplied by Mr. E. M. Forster. He saw the inhabitants of the sub-continent purely as a subject race, and therefore found them always placed, like Jane Austen's 'poor', or the working classes of Dickens, only in suitable and carefully allocated corners of his general pattern of life.

His short-stories best isolate the Muslims from their Indian neighbours. Built up mainly under the creative influence of Browning and Poe, the pattern used in them combines the technique of self-revelation used by the one, with the em-

phasis on strain, horror and sadism in the other. So that in both cases Kipling is led to exploit Pakistani characteristics which are in themselves unreal. In the former, the pattern means that the chief figure must have a subtly twisted moral angle which evolves itself through rambling confessions. Hence arises a favourite literary device of both Kipling and Browning, a 'lingo', based as it happens not so much on the idiom of English implicit in Urdu, which one might have expected, and which might have produced, though an unreality, yet an unreality as genuine as that of Caradoc Evans in Welsh, or James Joyce in Irish, but a kind of oriental flummery reminiscent of the Bible of King James, or the imitative talk of the translations of the *Arabian Nights*. This would give it a Barrie-like falsity, and reduce it to a 'Wardour Street' level. The broth is thickened by more than a touch of that worldly wisdom and superficial *savoir-vivre* of de Maupassant, qualities much more easy to imitate by the would-be short-story writer, which Kipling was, than that truth to the inherent pattern of life in his own selected milieu, which constitutes the Frenchman's real claim to greatness.

Kipling's journalistic qualities, which are of a very high order within their own category, were, and still are, impressive in their immediate appeal to the social group ready to respond to them: men and women busy with some active day to day struggle, compelled to see life in terms of a sort of shorthand which passes itself without rousing any difficulties into the administrative machine. But they do not demand from him or from his readers any depth of understanding or expressiveness. Here Kipling is giving expression to nothing but his own lively, crude, angry, picturesquely simplified and conventionally sardonic formula of life, not to life itself. He, like the journalist, is not absolutely called upon for depth of understanding. He needs to impose from without, only more brilliantly than most because he has genius among his literary gifts, and therefore he does it the more deceptively in the first

place, a pattern of interpretation he has noted as succeeding elsewhere. Real expressiveness can only normally come from someone who works out a living instrument of speech, for what is to him not a thing just seen but his own life and breath, out of the plastic word-material around him. It is indeed doubtful whether a man using a language not native to the country of his choice can do it. Charles Doughty may have succeeded in the case of Arabia. It is generally accepted in English literary comment that in his *Arabia Deserta* he has done it: but, I wonder?

As I see them, most of the attempts at understanding, or presenting an understanding of, the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent seem to bear the same relation, to even such a book as Doughty's, as books like *The English, are they Human*? and *How to be an Alien*, at one end of the scale, and the 'Colonel Bramble' novels of the French author André Maurois at the other, do to a real expression of the character of the English. At their worst they are skits at which one's good humour can afford to laugh. At their best they offer a set of conventionally framed-up puppets, whose antics, in so far as they conform to patterns which we have grown used to recognizing as a convention meaning 'us', we do not find utterly repulsive.

I happen to belong to a generation of readers who found Kipling and all he stood for repugnant, if not repulsive. To me, with my special interests, his literary slickness in individual short stories was, as an artistic *tour de force*, attractive enough, especially when their subject matter did not concern 'India', though I quickly tired of them. I enjoyed *Kim*, too, as a sort of panoramic fantasia on the more picturesque elements of the then (to me) unknown land and its peoples. It was not unduly out of harmony with my delusive notions of the 'Orient': its tartness and knowingness, combined with its moments of unexpected grace, gave one the feeling that inaccuracies in one's impressions were being rectified. It had of course all the elements of the popular 'boy's story' of the period, the serialized

novels of papers such as *Chums* and *The Scout*, whose hey-day was in those early years of the twentieth century, and which are now, I suppose, moribund. It contained the characteristic boy hero, first given outstanding literary status by Stevenson in *Treasure Island*, and later sentimentalized for the consumption of the down-cushioned upper middle classes by Barrie in *Peter Pan*. Kipling's boy hero admittedly was more vital, purposeful and meaningful than either, but the quest, the disguises, the succession of mystery men, the one mystery man in especial who seemed to embody some outlandish ethos fascinating in its very vagueness and its hints of mystic pass-words, the secret documents and symbols: all these familiar elements were there, even to the extent that the last two seemed firmly to establish in the novel a doctrine of the superiority of contemplation over action, which is at variance with the ethos of his other works. Much of the story, incidentally, takes place in what is now Pakistan, but beyond a few trimmings added to the chattering, half-comic, half-romanticized orientalism of the earlier stories to which I have alluded, there is little attempt at real interpretation.

All this, such was my impression, Mr. E. M. Forster had in *A Passage to India* put under the test of his sub-acid and sensitive understanding, and reduced to the stage properties and fancy dress stuff that it was. But what did Forster put in its place? He is, I find, rather a deceptive writer. At my first reading of him, which, quite frankly, did not occur until about fourteen years after the publication of the novel, I felt that he had written a work wonderful in its real understanding of India. It certainly presented a picture more flattering, as we saw it, and conceivably more acceptable to local feelings of Muslim or Hindu, though it played mockingly over weaknesses and personalities in a way that might have inspired resentment. It was far less flattering and in certain respects decidedly unfair to the British officials of the time, if one may judge from comments I have heard from Pakistanis since coming out here.

After all, Forster was not trying to produce a judicial summary, and this treatment may have been inherent in the theme. At least the book bore all the stamp of an honest attempt at understanding, in its characterization of both Muslims and Hindus. It is arguable that Forster is more successful with the former than the latter, and perhaps it is an indication of this that his main character is a Muslim, while the chief Hindu figure is a fantastic, other-worldly and finally almost symbolical figure, rather than one of flesh and blood.

Of one matter he gives a very convincing impression, a matter of which Kipling seems to have had no inkling, namely the sense Muslims here have of being not just nationals of a certain country, their immediate and beloved fatherland, but inheritors of and participators in a world-wide culture, in terms of a world extending from the Pillars of Hercules to East of Singapore, and from the southern tip of India to the Russian steppes. It is in fact 'his own country, more than a faith, more than a battle-cry, more, much more . . . Islam, an attitude towards life both exquisite and durable, where his body and his thoughts found their home.' One symbol of this unity, before which in the book the Muslim characters, with their casualness in small things, and even in those which the West regards as big ones, their often crude, irritating jerky uneasiness under European contacts (which I must say directly contradicts my own experience of them, but which forms part of the picture given by Forster) stand united, is the poem of Ghalib which Dr. Aziz recites to his visiting friends from his sick bed. 'The silly intrigues, the gossip, the shallow discontent were stilled while words accepted as immortal filled the indifferent air.' And afterwards, when the thoughts 'flowed back' into the minds of the listeners, 'they had a pleasant freshness. The poem had done no "good" to anyone,' adds Forster, 'but it was a passing reminder, a breath from the divine lips of beauty, a nightingale between two worlds of dust.'

The pattern of Forster's thirty-year-old novel is more adult

than those of either Kipling or Mason. Its subtlety is such that it comes very near solving the problem of the European writer of Indo-Pakistan fiction. The motto 'Only Connect' suggests, in its humble phrasing and unpretentious mood, the intelligentsia of the early years of this century from whom Forster sprang. Into the context of this phrase, he swings with a tact as neat as that of Jane Austen, with her so much more minute material, a series of vast frescoes of Muslims, Hindu and Anglo-Indian life, comparable with that which we find in *Kim* in some respects, but much more of a *tour de force* in itself, since it gives something nearer the truth, and is apprehended by an intuition which had an incomparably shorter period of time in which to work itself out to fruition.

Where did this pattern come from? As one would expect, from Forster's own experience. The central oasis of the older English universities, whose idealizing atmosphere, freed in those early decades, as never since, from the clamour of our economic stresses encouraged abstract thought and æsthetic sensibility, fell on his emergence into the light of common day into sharp and brutal conflict with the world of violent and blatant approximations and vulgar inefficiencies, which H. G. Wells has satirized so fiercely for us in *Tono-Bungay*, a world in the midst of which Mason's *The Broken Road* is set, though his convention does not permit him to record it. Like D. H. Lawrence, who however had no such mental homeland as Forster, and hence lacked his nostalgic charm of manner, the latter sought the embodiment of the values he prized in all sorts of places outside the 'modern' world of his day. The Muslims here, in fact, are only perhaps valuable to him as reshapings, in a more propitious mental climate, of his Dorset shepherds, his Italians, his cosmopolitan intelligentsia, and here, as with them in the other novels, only rare and rather questionable flowers blossoming around them—Fielding and Miss Quested, out of the world of British officialdom—can reach that contact with them which to Forster is the crown of life.

In *A Passage to India*, the skill of Forster's craftsmanship, his delicate irony, the poetic feeling touched with that slight vein of mockery which is the rarest of literary gifts, above all, his power of orchestration are working at full pressure. They remain supremely effective during the exposition of the characters and of their opening relationships. The wonderful opening chapter, apparently nothing but descriptive fact, resembles the prelude to a symphony. But with the drama of the trial, which exploits melodrama ironically, but sometimes comes dangerously near to being melodramatic itself, they seem to get torn to pieces, and then 'peter out' into delicate fantasy with the Hindu episodes at the end. Nevertheless, for the presentation of the Muslim characters, one of whom occupies a central place, it preserves that full power which brings it very near to the 'exquisite and durable' quality which Forster had already noted in Muslim culture, and which harked back to the idealisms of his early manhood.

Although A. E. W. Mason's *The Broken Road* is by an author not normally put into any other classification than that of 'best-seller', it is the work of a man who has given serious thought to the art of fiction within certain limits, and gives one ground for reflection on the degree to which a preoccupation with the demands of a wide public taste may thrust a writer in the direction of higher literary values. It is considered worthy of mention in George Sampson's *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, an honour from which Mr. Aldous Huxley seems to find himself excluded. Nevertheless, this novel, which gives a vivid picture of the North-West Frontier Province setting, together with characteristic anecdotes, authentic atmosphere, and a very serious study of the dilemma of the Pathan prince, Shere Ali, who, mistakenly sent by the British Government to Eton and Balliol, returns home the most infuriated of the foes of its rule, is fundamentally neither a picaresque novel of foreign life, nor just a plain romance, but a tragedy. It is conceived as such and is

carried out on grandiose but, on the whole, finely controlled lines.

The compulsion of his theme leads Mason to take an attitude near that of Forster in relation to his Muslim characters, but he is at the same time fairer to the honest, if imperceptive, and not always so imperceptive, British official. The spirit of the dying Luffe, who strikes the note of the tragedy in his comment on the one important matter of which 'Government' (to use a Pakistani colloquialism) is not aware, returns later on in the person of Ralston, who echoes him: and it is symbolical, with a genuinely tragic irony, that the signal for the insurrection is given by vows solemnized over Luffe's long-forgotten grave, unknown to them. The second theme in the tragedy is the obsession which the frontier road of the title exerts over the Lindforth family, from the fantastic ancestor, long since disappeared, whom one always expects to hear of surviving among the hills as a beggar, but who never materializes, to the Lindforth whose slaying opens the book, and the third Lindforth, his son, who is fated to complete the road, even to the destruction of his David-and-Jonathan friendship with Shere Ali.

At the centre of the tale lies the figure of Violet Oliver, whose charm and weaknesses are humanly but not quite convincingly portrayed, but who provides the occasion for each new development of the tragic plot: the embitterment of Shere Ali, the inspiration of Lindforth, the possibility of abduction which is otherwise rather conventionally introduced. The damping down of any romantic element in her disposition and in her ultimate fate, very unusual elements in a novel of this class, add of course to the breadth of general treatment. In matters of detail, the boxing match at Calcutta is good, so are the scenes of the collecting of information, the atmosphere of the hill-country episodes, the gathering of the Pathan nobles, the breaking of the pitcher at the mosque in Ajmere and the siege of Captain Phillips near the end.

From the point of view of the modern reader it is queer to note that, true to life, for the period, the uniform social level of the public-school class of the old days is maintained. The more picturesque elements, which are never allowed to push the main theme out of focus, as so often with Kipling, are clearly subordinated to the spirit of the writer's world of country house, club, residency, to the characteristic society functions of London or Delhi. The story jumps its points and moves rapidly forward, all sorts of things being assumed to be known, or accessible to the reader without the author's having to concern himself with making them clearer. Compared with *A Passage to India* (1924), this 1907 novel, while noting Ali's resentment at the idea that 'what is good for us', meaning the British, is good for everybody else in India, does not show any awareness that many people of both races, as part of the authentic atmosphere of the time at least, shared Shere Ali's misgivings. About halfway through, the white-man-adventure and romantic elements get the upper hand, and the consequent emergence and acceptance as pattern at this moment of a conventional formula, complete with all its stage 'props' of mystery, disguise and high level politics, tends to lower what was conceived in an honourably tragic vein, and so nearly carried out in accordance with it, into a Masonesque novel. The tragedy pattern into which the novel is cast perhaps reflects the influence on general novel-writing of the discussions on form and style which Henry James, Joseph Conrad and H. G. Wells were holding during the first decade of this century. This much may be said. The novel is an honest period-piece. Apart from its absolute value as literature, it has just enough subtlety to give it an added value as contributing to the literature of expression and understanding, which the others lack.

# 14

# IQBAL: HIS PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION, AND THE WEST

ALESSANDRO BAUSANI

IQBAL does not like the term 'God'; this word can have a plural, 'gods'. Better for him is *Allah*, the personal name the Holy Koran gives to God, as Yahweh is the personal name for God in the Bible. In the Greek world, on the contrary, God in the general sense was an abstraction, *to theion*, 'divinity', the Divine Principle or Substance, only the different gods having personal names (Jupiter, Venus, etc.). All the philosophical and theological work of the great Pakistani thinker is centred on a defence—conducted on modern and original lines—of the Semitic idea of *God as personality*, against the Greek and classical one of *God as substance*. In other words we could describe his position as that of *theism versus pantheism*, if these terms were not too vague. 'The result of an intellectual view of life—says Iqbal in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*—is necessarily pantheistic' (p. 82). In his philosophy, then, 'heart' plays a very important role, heart not in the European sense but rather, as Persian *dil*, considered as the centre of intuition.

Modern thought developed following the lines chiefly of Greek spiritual experience. The 'substance' of the ancient world—called *God* in the Middle Ages—became an all-embracing and all-producing 'idea' in Hegel. The Semitic idea of a *personal* God, which could have given a different direction to European thought and which made its appearance with Chris-

tianity, was very early distorted by interpretations based on concepts borrowed from Hellenistic culture, and the great Prophet of God as Loving Father became a Greek hypostasis, an incarnation of something divine. Islam—especially early Islam, more near the Koranic world of thought—gave a powerful impulse again to the idea of God as supreme personality with which man can come in contact, rather than a vague force with which it is impossible to come face to face—but, unfortunately even the thinkers of Islam fell under the magic spell of purely intellectual philosophy, transforming the creative power of the Living and Ever-working God (*Kullu yawmin huwa fi shan*, كل يوم هو في شان 'Every day He is in a new work,' says the Holy Koran) into an abstract pattern of a fixed universe. In this way many of the wonderful possibilities Islam had, to change the world, were lost. In any case Muslim thinkers were comparatively less affected by classical thought than the Christians, and Iqbal justly points out the importance of the Ash'arite 'atomistic' school of thought and of other champions of the purely Koranic conception of God against any compromise with static pantheistic thought. I wonder whether in our Occidental world such purely monotheistic conceptions were ever defended by a theologian or a philosopher as was done by Ibn Taymiyya. Aristotelian philosophy, adapted by St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) to Christian theology has been since then the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church, being even openly declared as such by Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903). The rebellions against 'classical' thought in our world were of a mystic rather than prophetic character, like the remarkable Franciscan school in the Middle Ages—God remaining always an absolute principle or a rational ordainer of the Cosmos, rather than a creator, or, at the best, something very sweet in which the human soul wanted to be dissolved.

Perhaps a more frontal attack on the Greek thought was the great Protestant Reformation, opposing the Semitic Bible to

the philosophy of the schools. And this gave indeed good results: the reconquered personal and living God aroused again the spirit of activity in man and the so-called 'modern' world was born. But, the Greek germs contained in the New Testament (I mean especially St. Paul's Epistles and the Fourth Gospel) constrained orthodox Protestantism into the fixed conception of personal atonement, giving sometimes to it a very narrow mental intolerance; and, on the other hand, the so-called liberal school became more and more a simply rationalistic theory on the main lines of the current philosophy of the age. This is now based chiefly on Hegel's thought, one of the most rigorous and perfect forms of intellectual pantheism which gave birth both to modern absolute idealism (taken to its logical conclusion by the Italian Philosopher G. Gentile, d. 1943) reducing all reality into 'thought thinking of itself', and to Marxism—a powerful giant with feet of clay, with 'believing heart and atheist brain', as Iqbal wrote in his *Javednama.*

The last attack on classical thought in Europe is represented by 'existentialism'. To some of the existentialists the same words Iqbal used for Nietzsche (considered by themselves one of their precursors) could be applied; they threw themselves away from God and so they cut away from themselves their own self, and they too, like Iqbal's Nietzsche, soar in a void space singing desperately: 'No Gabriel, no paradise, no huri, no God, only a handful of clay burnt by the eternal longing of the heart!' (*Javednama.*)

Iqbal's religious philosophy represents—in my opinion—the most radical modern revindication of the old prophetic idea called 'monotheism', and at the same time, implicitly, a radical criticism of the entire trend of European thought from Plato to Gentile and existentialism. Iqbal's philosophy of religion offers to us a new direction to choose. Against the ever-living instinctive polytheism of our souls he offers the alternative of *iman* (Faith): Iqbal calls his Superman a *mu'min*, a believer, and

here lies his basic difference from Nietzsche's rebellion and from all the modern Occidental anarchisms.

But let us now enunciate the chief points of Iqbal's criticism of Greek thought, or better of classical thought and hence of the whole trend of modern thought.

Against abstract dualism: 'Plato despised sense perception which, in his view, yielded mere opinion and no real knowledge' (p. 4). 'With Islam the ideal and the real are not two opposing forces which cannot be reconciled' (p. 12). 'Islam says yes to the world of matter and points the way to master it' (p. 13).

The dualism between profane and spiritual is still very strong in our world. For Iqbal '*all is holy ground* . . . the state, from the Islamic standpoint, is an endeavour to transform these ideal principles into space-time forces. It is in this sense alone that the state in Islam is a theocracy, not in the sense that it is headed by a representative of God on earth' (pp. 216–271), a typically pre-Christian idea adopted by the Roman Catholic Church and in more profane forms by dictatorial states. With perhaps the sole exception of the Jewish people previous to the establishment of monarchy by Samuel and the early Islam, humanity never experienced this original form of theocratic democracy, which—developed on new lines—could offer the only concrete alternative to the disorder of modern democracy and the tyranny of modern dictatorships.

*Against the Greek idea of the immobility of God:* 'The Universe is so constituted that it is capable of extension. "God adds to His creation what He wills" (Kor. 35/1). It is not a clock universe, a finished product immobile and incapable of change. Deep in its inner being lies perhaps the dream of a new birth: ". . . hereafter will He give it another birth" (Kor. 29/19).' This, of course, is an ideal European thought borrowed from the Semitic religions, Christianity and Islam, only transferring the attribute of motion from God to the World. It is in any case interesting to remark that for Islam the idea of a

moving God, living, even changing his mind (this is the deeper sense of such concepts as the shi'ite *bada'*, or the principle of *an-nasikh wa 'l-mansukh*, or the successive prophethood) is an orthodox one, whereas the dominating Aristotelianism of the Christian churches, fixing God as an almost impersonal substance and giving to Christ a unique and fixed position in the series of the revealers of God, made of the idea of the 'changing God' almost a blasphemy.

*Against the classical proofs of the existence of God:* Modern anti-religious thought profits by the obvious philosophical criticism of the classical 'five proofs' of St. Thomas in order to deny God. Iqbal, following in this the most traditionalist theological schools of Islam—denies that God, the living God of the Koran, may be proved by means of the Cosmological, Teleological and Ontological arguments. 'The cosmological argument . . . tries to reach the infinite by merely negating the finite. But the infinite reached by contradicting the finite is a false infinite' (p. 40). 'The teleological argument—he says—gives us a contriver only and not a creator' (pp. 40–41). 'All that the ontological argument proves is that the idea of a perfect being includes the *idea* of his existence' (p. 42).

The living God of the Koran (and, I add, of the Bible too) is always something different from the purely intellectual God reached through those arguments, which would acquire life 'only if we are able to show that thought and being are ultimately one' (p. 43). Iqbal doesn't give us an elaborate proof of the existence of God, the true God, but he only establishes the basis for a working proof. 'What we call Nature,' he says, 'is only a fleeting moment in the life of God . . . in the picturesque phrase of the Koran it is *the habit of Allah*' (p. 76). Therefore proofs taken only from Nature do not prove anything about the true creator. 'But . . . intuition reveals Life as a centralizing Ego.'

*Personality of God:* God is then not a substance but an Ego. 'In order to emphasize the individuality of the ultimate Ego

the Koran gives him the proper name of Allah (p. 87). But does not individuality imply finitude? The answer is that God cannot be conceived as infinite in the sense of spatial infinity' (p. 89). True infinity does not mean infinite extension which cannot be conceived without embracing all available finite extensions. Its nature consists in intensity and not extensity (p. 164). 'The infinity of the Ultimate Ego consists in the infinite inner possibilities of His creative activity of which the Universe as known to us is only a partial expression' (p. 90). This is a very important point as—in contrast to the classical conception of God—it emphasizes the idea of a changing God, of a God for which Nature is a habit or—to put it as a paradox—a juvenile exercise of the creating God, in preparation of more and more wonderful works. In this lies also hidden a new solution of the old problem, the crux of theism, i.e., the problem of Evil. Nature is neither bad nor good in itself, it is one of the first exercises of God, who 'hereafter will give it another birth'.

*Creativeness of God:* Among the attributes, *sif'at*, of the Koranic God the most important is creativeness. Most of the modern European philosophers agree in admitting that the idea of the creativeness of Spirit is a great contribution of Semitic thought to Western philosophy, as it was unknown to Greek philosophy. But the Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages, imbued with Aristotelian ideas, accepted the idea of a created world only because it was stated in the Bible, without deducing from it the necessary philosophical consequences. St. Thomas even frankly admits that this idea is logically difficult to accept and believable only relying on the Bible. Muslim thought on the contrary has always given the utmost importance to creation, even going so far as to consider human acts as created in order to save the idea of the absolute creativeness of God. The Ash'arite school, with the aim of completely abolishing all those Aristotelian *causae secundae* which could compromise the freedom of the creative act of

God, elaborated the highly interesting theory of atomism 'the first important indication of an intellectual revolt against the Aristotelian idea of a fixed universe' (p. 93). 'According to the Ash'arite school of thinkers . . . the world is composed of what they call *jawahir*, infinitely small parts or atoms which cannot be further divided. Since the creative activity of God is ceaseless . . . fresh atoms are coming into being every moment and the universe is therefore constantly growing . . . Existence is a quality imposed on the atoms by God . . . What we call a thing . . . is in its essential nature an aggregation of atomic acts' (p. 95). 'Nothing has a stable nature' (p. 97). This idea of a casual and atomically discontinuous universe, moving by jumps rather than by rational evolution, is considered as the best adapted for God as a free creator and it is not only strangely similar to what some modern scientists think of the Cosmos, but, once admitted, forms a further step for the proofs of the existence of the true personal God: for only an 'artistic personality' could bring forth from a casual and purely fortuitous aggregation of atoms results impressing our souls as 'beauty'. This can be done by that supreme Ego in which 'thought and being are ultimately one' and to whom belong *amr* and *khalq*: *khalq* meaning the creative act of God in relation to the universe of extension (the world of matter) and *amr* the creative relation of God with the world of Spirit. All this, together with the Iqbalian idea of man as creator (see following point) gives to Man a sound aggressiveness towards things. The non-existence of things as hard and stony realities given for ever, and the possibility for the truly spiritual man (*mu'min*, the believer) to create new counter-things, considering the existing ones as habits or juvenile exercises of God, abolishes in Man every kind of melancholic and romantic passivity, which always results from considering the actual reality as definitive, and constitutes a true spiritual *jihad* (holy war). Man then, if centred in God, becomes a founder of ever new and unforeseeable realities.

*Man and his destiny:* The idea of risk, so emphasized by modern existentialism, is clearly present in the Koran; '. . . man', says Iqbal, 'is the trustee of a free personality which he accepted at his peril.' 'Verily we proposed to the heavens and to the earth and to the mountains to receive the trust, but they refused the burden and they feared to receive it. Man undertook to bear it' (Kor. 33/72) (p. 134). 'The Ego had its beginnings in time and did not pre-exist its emergence in the spacio-temporal order. According to the Koranic view there is no possibility of return on this earth. Finitude is not a misfortune . . . It is with the irreplaceable singleness of his individuality that the finite Ego will approach the infinite Ego . . .' (p. 162). 'The Koran does not contemplate complete liberation from finitude as the highest state of human bliss . . .' (p. 163). This point is connected with the Koranic and Biblical idea of the 'reality of Time and the concept of Life as a continuous movement in time, whereas the Greek time was either unreal as in Plato and Zeno, or moved in a circle as in Heraclitus and the Stoics', but 'the movement itself, if conceived as cyclic, ceases to be creative' (pp. 196–7). The Protestant theologian, O. Cullman, in his highly interesting book *Christus und die Zeit* (Christ and Time) discovered—independently of Iqbal—this very interesting anti-cyclical 'tension of time' in the prophetic religion, only giving it a peculiar Christian turn. In any case, from this point of view (and it is really strange that only now the modern world begins to appreciate this living thought so clearly represented—if not literally stated—in those Holy Scriptures which ought to be and are not the basis of life for Christian people) the whole problem of 'immortality' presents itself in a new light. 'And then shall be a blast on the trumpet and all who are in the heavens and all who are on the Earth shall faint away (no special rights, then, even for celestial beings in front of the personal power of God!) save those in whose case God wills otherwise' (Kor. 39/69). 'Who can be the subject of this exception—Iqbal adds—but those in

whom the Ego has reached the very highest point of intensity?' (p. 163).

In his typical conception of Reality as a complex of egoes (matter itself being 'a colony of egoes of a low order' (p. 147) Iqbal clearly shows himself a disciple of the spiritual pluralism (very near to Leibnitz) of the former Hegelian McTaggart who was his master in philosophy. But McTaggart's arguments in defence of self as elementally immortal are weak. From the mere fact that the individual ego is a differentiation of the eternal Absolute Ego (Koranically speaking, *an-nafsu min amri rabbi*, the soul is from the direction of my Lord) it by no means follows that the human self retains the character which belongs to his source alone. According to Iqbal 'Personal immortality . . . is not ours as of right; it is to be achieved by personal effort. Man is only *a candidate* for it' (p. 165).

Immortality is not something which can be proved—as in Plato's Phædon—but a state to be conquered: here is the proof. For our modern world, which, abandoning God, is frantically looking for a cheap and sure personal immortality often through the most strange channels (spiritism, modern magics, etc.), Iqbal's warning is very strong; the idea that not all are immortal is in perfect agreement, I think, also with the spirit of the Old Testament which—according to modern critics—ignored the typically Greek thought of the 'immortality of the soul'. The old-fashioned Christian and Muslim dogma of the resurrection of the body is—in its deep respect for our physical frame which is called by Iqbal in Zabur-i-Ajam *hal az ahval-i hayat*—one of the states of life, a symbol of the idea of an immortality of the *entire* self.

A modern Western mind can find in Iqbal's philosophy of religion not only an interesting mental or purely theoretical outlook on life and the universe and God, but, more than this, concrete proposals for a change of direction for building the future world on new lines. The rediscovering of the pure Koranic and Biblical God can and must be a new point of

departure for the construction of a new history, a religious beginning of new realities.

'Man is a creator.' This idea of Iqbal has strong attraction for modern Western minds, and could be given as the essence of Iqbal's philosophy of religion. Iqbal even defends it by quoting the famous verse of the Holy Koran *fatabaraka' Ilahu ahsanu'l-khaliqin*, 'Blessed be God, the best of creators.' Of course modern Occidental thinkers had already proclaimed some of the ideas of Iqbal: names like those of Leibnitz, Nietzsche, Bergson, James Ward, McTaggart come naturally to our minds. But they did so from an essentially 'profane' point of view. Owing to the too strict connection between Biblical personal monotheism and Greek philosophy in Europe, the revolt to a 'fixed universe' in Western countries meant also a rebellion against the idea of the Biblical God: so that nobody in Europe recognized the great progressive and modern values implied in a really pure monotheism, which, I think with Iqbal, even in post-Koranic thought did not succeed in affirming itself completely. A 'really pure monotheism' means totally divesting the forces of Nature of that divine character with which not only 'earlier cultures' (as Iqbal says, p. 177) but even—in different and more perfectioned forms—all modern cultures too have clothed them. It means moreover the radical invalidity and impossibility of every worldly 'authority', inasmuch as only God is the real Lord; giving at the same time to democracy that organic character and unitarian enthusiasm which only Faith can give and which unfortunately purely profane democracies lack. In this really *pure* theocracy (I repeat this: the authority of the Pope, certain forms of Caliphate, etc., *are not* pure theocracies, because it is not only God who reigns in them) the 'slave of God'—in the words of Iqbal's *Javednama*—'can dispense of any state and position. He has no servants; and he is servant of nobody. The slave of God is no more than a perfectly free man: his kingdom and law are given to him by God, by nobody else . . .'

In this way, that is by adopting the standpoint of God, by being, in the words of the Koran, God's *khalifa* (vicegerent) on earth, man can develop a tremendous revolutionary force and yet avoid that frantic hysterical explosion peculiar to anarchic atheistic movements, and can in this way substitute the civilization of science as creation of values for one of simple vision of values. Obedience, *ita'at*, (to God of course and to his laws) means very much for Iqbal: an entire section of *Asrar-i-Khudi* (*The Secrets of the Self*) is dedicated to it. Not man *as he is now*, but man purified through obedience, self dominion, and detachment, can reach the high station of *niyabat-i-ilahi*, Divine Vicegerency. One could say that—contrary to Occidental practice—revolution is for Iqbal a final aim, not a means. The means consist in submitting himself to a strong and austere spiritual discipline. Be detached from the material world—Iqbal says—in order to become a real revolutionary! The sense of 'spiritual discipline'—after the too other-worldly period of medieval asceticism—has been completely lost by Europe. For Iqbal it lies in obedience to the simple laws enjoined by God in the Holy Koran. Only afterwards can man exercise the creative power he shares with God. And then unprecedented things may happen. Because, in the words of the Koran, man's limit is not in the direction of the stars: '*and verily towards God is thy limit*' (Kor. 53/43).

# 15

# THE INDIVIDUAL IN DEMOCRACY AND IQBAL'S CONCEPTION OF KHUDI

J. J. HOUBEN

ACCORDING to Iqbal the most fundamental fact of man's life is the absolute and irrefutable consciousness of his *own* being; the purpose of his life is to strengthen and stabilize this basic feeling of ego-hood which Iqbal calls 'khudi'. Thus wrote A. G. Chagla in his article 'Some Aspects of Iqbal's Thought' (*Triveni Quarterly*, XVIII, June 1946, p. 5). It would, of course, be completely wrong to interpret Iqbal's doctrine in a mere naturalistic or rationalistic way. As we shall see later, this theory is wholly integrated within the framework of Iqbal's religious convictions. On the other hand it is of the greatest importance to enlarge on this basic doctrine and to make clear what it holds of deep and lasting thought for the only true acceptance of personality and democracy.

In the following pages I shall try to explain and interpret what Iqbal succinctly wrote in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*: 'Can the finite ego, as such, retain its finitude beside the Infinite Ego? This difficulty is based on a misunderstanding of the true nature of the infinite. True infinity does not mean infinite extension which cannot be conceived without embracing all available finite extensions. Its nature consists in intensity and not extensity; and the moment we fix our gaze on intensity, we begin to see that the finite must be distinct, though not isolated, from the Infinite' (Oxford edition, 1934, p. 112). Or as Iqbal wrote to Nicholson (Intro-

duction to *The Secrets of the Self*, p. xv): 'Physically as well as spiritually man is a self-contained centre, but he is not yet a complete individual. The greater his distance from God the less his individuality. He who comes nearest to God is the complete person . . . The ego attains to freedom by the removal of all obstructions in its way. It is partly free, partly determinate, and reaches full freedom by approaching the individual who is most free—God.'

The distinction here hinted at by Iqbal between personality and individuality, but not brought to full clarity, is of great importance to understanding the real value of democracy for Muslims as well as for Western people. Why he does not clarify it more fully, he explains while discussing another problem, intimately connected with it, namely the separation between Church and State. Iqbal says: 'In Islam the spiritual and the temporal are not two distinct domains, and the nature of an act, however secular in its import, is determined by the attitude of mind with which the agent acts. It is the invisible mental background of the act which ultimately determines its character' (*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 146, also 216). 'In Islam,' he goes on, 'it is the same reality which appears as Church looked at from one point of view and State from another.' A few lines further on he writes: '*The point is extremely far-reaching and a full elucidation of it will involve us in a highly philosophical discussion.*' (Italicized by the author.)

This elucidation we propose to offer in this article, meanwhile constantly referring to Iqbal's doctrine on the different points. This seems all the more necessary since the theory advanced by Iqbal is taken up by other authors as final and conclusive though Iqbal himself referred to it as needing further elucidation. Iqbal, in the text quoted above, indicates what this elucidation would involve where he distinguishes between the 'secular and the spiritual' as found in every human activity. This distinction is essentially connected with what the Koran calls sinfulness and virtue; it is connected with that which we

all experience in actual human society, in Muslim society as well as in any other society, namely: peace and war, health and disease, sin and virtue, the spiritual and the material, Church and State. In the last resort it is connected with what Iqbal sees as the opposition between man's intention and the secular import of his act, the invisible mental background of his act and the act as it proceeds from him as from a man in body and soul. It might seem at first that in regard to the problem of human life in its present surroundings, Iqbal takes a different view from the one adopted by Christianity, where he says: 'In Islam the ideal and the real are not two opposing forces which cannot be reconciled' (*Reconstruction*, p. 9). Indeed, Christianity would wholly agree where he says: 'They can be reconciled in the perpetual endeavour of the ideal to appropriate the real with a view eventually to absorb it, to convert it into itself and to illuminate its whole being' (ibid.). The author, however, elsewhere admits those opposing forces, where he discusses the doctrine of Adam's fall: 'The experience of the finite ego to whom several possibilities are open expands only by method of trial and error' (*Reconstruction*, p. 82). Does not the Koran say: 'Descend ye as enemies of one another'? Iqbal goes on (ibid., p. 83): 'This mutual conflict of opposing individualities is the world-pain which both illuminates and darkens the temporal career of life.'

While discussing the problem of Church and State, Iqbal admits freely that his idea is only a personal one, while other doctrines could be held by Muslims. He says: 'Though personally I think it is a mistake to suppose that the idea of State is more dominant and rules all other ideas embodied in the system of Islam . . .' (*Reconstruction*, p. 146). We fully admit his objection against giving to the State or to the temporal a higher status than the one given to the spiritual and the religious; this all religions do which believe in the opposition between virtue and sin. But once these are accepted we are forced to open the discussion on those 'far-reaching' points of a

'highly philosophical' nature, which necessarily involve the problem of personality and individuality, of Church and State, of democracy and theocracy.

Muhammad Natsir, discussing the theory about democracy and theocracy, makes Iqbal's doctrine his own, saying that Church and State in Islam are one and the same. He nevertheless rejects theocracy in Islam, because, as he says: 'Islam has not got a priesthood' ('Iqbal on the separation between Religion and State', *The Islamic Review*, July, 1953, p. 5). This argument, however, does not seem to be convincing. Even if there is no official priesthood in Islam, theocracy may be exercised by caliphs and sultans and kings, as long as they are directly ordained by God to represent His power on earth, as the Ash'arite doctrine would have it. A real argument for democracy in Islam can be found in the fact that the Rashiduna-caliphs held only mediate and indirect power from God, in so far as they were chosen by representatives of the people and not as the later Ash'arite doctors would have it, that they were the direct 'shadow of God's power on earth'. Another argument against theocracy in Islam is found in the doctrine about the individual and the person. These 'Secrets of the Self' have never been sung by any other Muslim author as clearly as they have been sung in verse and prose by the great Iqbal.

Man as a whole is an individual, but as a whole he is also a person. Nevertheless the focus of individuality is quite different from that of personality. If this stand is correct, and we shall see that it really is, it may be clear that the democracy of the individual in which the nineteenth century had placed its hopes, must, if the world is to be saved for civilization, be replaced by the democracy of the person. That means: the democracy of that holiest in man, which is his religious ego. This will prove to be of paramount necessity for every country and every civilization, if the world is going to be liberated from its all-embracing crisis. The 'philosophy' which we are going to propose here is to a great extent similar to the one contained in

Iqbal's writings; it is opposed, however, to different kinds of philosophy which have embarrassed the world now for some time.

*I. The philosophical principles*

The period of critical theories, such as are expounded by authors like Kant, Hegel and the like, were a form of subtle European 'enlightment' in which reason sought to possess itself. They forgot, however, that the critique of knowledge, the reflection of reason upon itself, can be an abstract theory, as they claimed it to be, but that, in order to be real philosophy, it must be a living experience. However strongly knowledge may contrast itself to life, it is in itself part of life. This is what the most creative philosophers of our age, (creative in that sense in which Iqbal uses it where he says: 'One who does not possess creative power, to us is naught.' *The Secrets of the Self*), like Bergson, Scheler, Heidegger, and Iqbal have reminded us of thus bringing homage to the philosophy of those, who preceded these harassed times and proposed a much more real and lasting philosophy such as that of Thomism. The point is, that the critique of knowledge, the reflection of reason upon itself in the schools of late, has been contrasted with life itself, while in reality knowledge is generated by life. Iqbal says: 'The view that ego-activity is a succession of thoughts and ideas, ultimately resolvable to units of sensations, is only another form of atomic materialism which forms the basis of modern science' (*Reconstruction*, pp. 101–102). Knowledge is a reality, it takes place in reality. Rationalistic philosophy of the past generations has treated knowledge as concerned with objects which lie outside life, while in reality it is an act in and through which something happens to reality, or better: reality is illumined by knowledge, is lit up from within. As Iqbal says: 'When the Self awoke to consciousness, it revealed the universe of thought . . . Self-affirmation brings not-self to light' (*The Secrets of the Self*). The severance between knowledge and

reality is the fatal result of rationalism which denies that the act of knowledge is an existential act. Yet if reality stands over against knowledge, there can be no inner connection between the two and knowledge does not form part of reality—which cannot but be false.

It is not difficult to see how this mode of rationalistic philosophy was part of the times in which it arose. This degraded philosophy which wanted to forget all that went before of real philosophy, coincided with the stage in which philosophy wanted to be a science and in which philosophy found itself in slavish dependence on the natural sciences. (*v. Reconstruction*, p. 101.) Scientific philosophy, however, renounces wisdom and has even gone so far as to regard this as a gain and an achievement. But this is tragic. The claim of philosophy to be independent of life and to separate itself from life, is a false claim which can never be realized. Philosophy cannot be separated from life, because it must be life in order to be philosophy.

But just as philosophy cannot be separated from life, it cannot but be intimately connected with the life of the philosopher, so that the knower's faith and religious conviction of the ego are bound to benefit by the enlightening influence of his philosophy in the same way as the philosophy of someone professing to have no religion necessarily influences his conclusions about the most vital questions. No philosopher can forget these essential matters or reduce them to mere abstractions in his cognitive activity. Because philosophy is part of life, the spiritual experiences must lie at the basis of man's knowledge. It has often been proposed by rationalist thinkers that this is a disadvantage. This is not so. On the contrary: the theological knowledge of the revelation of one's faith, for example, is an inner fact and therefore a philosophical experience by which his philosophy is lit up from within so that the philosophy, which is essentially human, is nurtured by it.

What we have called the tragedy of the philosophy of the

last centuries, against which Iqbal so vehemently reacted, is that having cut itself loose from the higher realms of religion and revelation it falls into a worse dependence, namely on the lower realms of positive science and scientific experience. By it philosophy for many lost its birthright and all proof of its ancient lineage. Philosophy is knowledge, but it is impossible to identify it with scientific knowledge, because as knowledge it is *sui generis*. Philosophy cannot wait for the discoveries of science. Science is in a perpetual flux; its theories and hypotheses frequently change and become out of date; man continually makes new discoveries. So during the last forty years there has been a revolution in physics which has radically changed its fundamental principles. (*v*. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*.) But can it ever be said, that the metaphysical principles of Aristotle have been superseded by the discoveries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Those principles are far more stable than the 'discoveries', far more eternal, because concerned with what is eternal. The world is revealed to philosophy in a different way than it is to science. In spite of Husserl who did his utmost to make philosophy a pure science and eliminate from it all element of wisdom, philosophy always has been and will be wisdom. In spite of Hegel, who put his philosophy above religion and thus exceeded the bounds, philosophy is always based upon spiritual and moral experience.

It was against this trend of Western rationalistic thinking that Iqbal reacted and very rightly so. While philosophy sees the world from the point of view of man, science sees the world apart from man, and that caused the tragedy of some of the schools of Western thinking by which they landed into relativity and uncertainty and into doubting everything but their own dogma of doubt.

'It is pure dogmatism on the part of science to claim that the aspects of Reality selected by it are the only aspects to be studied,' Iqbal says. (*Reconstruction*, p. 107.) Knowledge of the

reality in and through man has nothing to do with subjective idealism; this on the contrary confines man to the objectified world of nature. The German schools of epistemology of Windelband and Ricket refused to study man as a knower and abandoned him to psychology and sociology; they refused to accept that knowledge is a creative activity of man. Though Kant's services to epistemology are great, he was not able to solve its problems; nor did Hegel, according to whom it is not man who is the knower, but the world-reason or world-spirit or in the last resort the Deity itself. But the theory that in man the Deity comes to know itself and that the world-spirit attains its highest development in man's philosophy, may seem to be very gratifying to man's pride and sense of dignity, actually however in this doctrine man is merely a function of the world-spirit (which for those philosophers is not God) and loses his own spiritual reality. According to Husserl in order to know an object man must renounce everything human, become entirely passive. But that would mean that in the act of knowledge man would cease to exist as man. What a degradation!

The mystery of knowledge is that in the act of knowing the knower transcends the object of his knowledge. Knowledge always means transcendence of the object and creative possession of it. Knowledge must be a source of light which is shed over reality. This, however, is only possible because the knower is a personality capable of creative acts. Or as Iqbal expresses it, where he speaks of the Self:

'A hundred worlds are hidden in its essence:
Self-affirmation brings not-self to light . . .
Subject, object, means and causes
All these are forms which it assumes for the purpose of action.
The Self rises, kindles, falls, glows, breathes,
Burns, shines, walks and flies . . .

'Tis the nature of the Self to manifest itself:
In every atom slumbers the might of the self.'
(*The Secrets of the Self*, pp. 16–19.)

It is because of all those conflicting trends of philosophical reasonings and confusions that Max Scheler, who is more interested in the problem of anthropology, says: 'Zu keiner Zeit der Geschichte ist der Mensch sich so problematisch geworden, wie in der Gegenwart' (*Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*). Man is now feeling uneasy about himself. Psychology, biology, sociology have not solved the problem of man in so far as he bears witness to the existence of a higher world. This man does by being a moral person. That means that the superhuman principle is a constituent element of man's nature. The very fact of the existence of man is a break in the natural world; it proves that nature cannot be self-sufficient but rests upon a supernatural reality. Man can only be explained and understood through his relation to God of whom he is the image in his personality, or as Iqbal called it: the 'divine vicegerency on earth of the human ego'.

*II. The human person*

Our idea of man must be founded on the concept of personality. Consequently it is essential to understand the relation between personality and individuality. It is what Iqbal would have elucidated if he had entered on a discussion of this 'highly philosophical' question.

*Individuality* is a naturalistic and biological category; personality, however, is a religious and spiritual one. An individual is part of the species; he is produced by the biological generic process: he is born and dies. According to St. Thomas Aquinas the individuality of inanimate and animate things is rooted in matter; that means: in *materia prima*, pure potentiality. Prime matter or absolute matter is a kind of non-being, a simple power of receptivity and of substantial mutability.

According to this doctrine the human soul constitutes with the matter which it informs a unique substance which is both spiritual and fleshly. Iqbal holds the same view. (*v. Reconstruction*, p. 99.) It is not as Descartes thought and many after him, the soul is not the thing (thought) existing as a complete being, and the body another being (extension) existing in its own way as a complete being. But soul and matter are two substantial co-principles of one and the same being, of a single and unique reality whose name is man.

It is because each soul is made to animate a particular body (which derives its matter from the germinative cells from which it springs with all their load of heredity); it is because each soul has a substantial relation, or rather is a substantial relation with a particular body; it is for these reasons that in its very substance it has individual characteristics which differentiate it from every other human soul. So for man as for all corporeal beings (as for the atom, the molecule, the plant, the animal) individuality has its primary ontological root in matter.

*Personality*, on the other hand, is not generated; it is created by God; it is God's idea, His conception, and lives in eternity. In opposition to the wholeness as found in the individual, personality is wholeness and unity possessing absolute and eternal worth, because personality is the image and likeness of God in man. This is why it rises above the natural life. Here is a definition of personality: a person is a reality which, subsisting spiritually, constitutes a universe by itself, an independent whole (relatively independent) in the great whole of the universe and facing the Transcendental Whole which is God. Iqbal explains this, where he says: 'The climax of this development (of man) is reached when the ego is able to retain full self-possession, even in the case of a direct contact with the all-embracing Ego' (*Reconstruction*, p. 111). (We would not agree with Iqbal's doctrine where he adheres to the theory of evolution, or where he says, on p. 113: 'Personal immortality is not ours as of right.') Personality is not a part of something,

a function of the genus or of society. Personality is spiritual and presupposes the existence of a spiritual world. The value of personality is the highest hierarchical value in the world, a value of the spiritual order. That is why the Christian doctrine sees in God the sovereign personality, since God's existence consists in a pure and absolute super-existence of intellection and love; that is also why Muslim thinkers like Iqbal and Rumi, with whom he concurs, admit a personal God, of whom man is the image in his personality.

Iqbal does not make the distinction between individuality and personality explicitly, though he certainly understood what we have explained above. Neither did Bergson in his 'Creative evolution'. Commenting on Bergson's sentence, 'Individuality, therefore, harbours its own enemy at home,' in which sentence individuality stands for man as a whole in whom the opposition between individuality and personality is said to amount to enmity, Iqbal, wanting to show how this imperfection of man is absent in God, says: 'In the light of this passage it is clear that the perfect individual (God), thought of as an ego, peerless and unique, cannot be conceived as harbouring its own enemy at home. It must be conceived as superior to the antagonistic tendency of reproduction (that is, of individuality as we have explained it above). This characteristic of the perfect ego is one of the most essential elements in the Koranic conception of God (and of the Christian conception of God); and the Koran mentions it over and again, not so much with a view to attack the current Christian conception as to emphasize its own view of a perfect individual.'

The notion of personality, therefore, does not refer to matter as individuality does. It refers to the highest and deepest dimensions of being. Personality is rooted in the spirit and it constitutes in the secret depth of our ontological structure, a source of dynamic unity and of inner unification. The spirit forms personality, enlightens and transfigures the biological individual and makes it the concrete fulness of life.

Also personality means interiority to oneself, as Iqbal says: 'The luminous point whose name is the self, is the life-spark beneath our dust' (*The Secrets of the Self*, ed. Nicholson, p. 28). But precisely because it is the spirit which (in a manner unknown to plant and animal) makes man cross the threshold of independence and interiority to oneself, consequently the subjectivity of the person has nothing to do with the monad of Leibniz, which has no doors or windows. (*v. Reconstruction*, p. 99.) The personality which is founded in the spirit of man demands the communication of intelligence and love. Because of the fact that I am a person and that I express myself to myself, I seek to communicate with that which is other and with others in the order of knowledge and of love. As a person I ask for a dialogue in which I can give myself and in which I am received really. Iqbal expresses this beautifully: 'By love it is made more lasting, more living, more burning, more glowing. From love proceeds the radiance of its (self's) being, and the development of its unknown possibilities' (*Secrets*, p. 38). Because this is not always actually possible, personality in man is linked with the experience of suffering even more deeply than to that of creative conflict. Iqbal calls this 'fâqr', the attitude which demands full detachment because the person gets all the more conscious that it is relative to the absolute in which alone it can find its fulfilment. It strives towards the absolute good, to God, with whom it not only bears the resemblance also found in other creatures, but whom it resembles in a peculiar fashion in that it is the image of God. For God is spirit and the person proceeds from Him in that he has as the principle of life a spiritual soul, a spirit capable of knowing and loving God Himself. This is the real greatness of the human person.

Max Scheler has given us (*Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materielle Weltethik*) an interesting theory of personality in which he develops a philosophical anthropology. According to him man is a being who transcends himself and the whole of

life. He regards man as undefinable biologically. The fundamental opposition is not the one between man and animal, but between personality and organism, spirit and life. This view is essential for his doctrine. He criticizes with great subtlety the conception of autonomy in Kant, Fichte and Hegel and rightly says that it means the autonomy of impersonal spirits and not of personality. However, the fault occurs where Scheler distinguishes between personality and the self; where he says, that personality is self-contained. Our answer must be that personality, though it is the very core of self and a whole by itself, is a whole which from its very nature presupposes other persons. So that according to our view, personality is impossible without love and sacrifice, without going out to others, to the friend and to the loved one.

At first sight, it might seem that Iqbal follows Scheler's view, where he says (*v. supra*, p. 1): 'Physically as well as spiritually man is a self-contained centre.' But he certainly did not mean it in Scheler's sense. This can be shown from many texts. Let the following suffice: 'The luminous point whose name is self, is the life-spark beneath our dust. By love it is made more lasting, more living, more burning, more glowing'; it is also 'faqr', because this love entails sacrifice and rendering of self. This sacrifice and this rendering of self is the highest activity of love; the ego is fortified by love ('ishq'), which means the desire to assimilate or absorb as well as that of giving oneself completely in one and the same act. The rendering of self is the real 'begging' for the love of the other. This is so much so, that personality, were it self-contained, as Scheler thinks, would disintegrate and that even the Personality of God in all His unity must contain the fulness of knowing and loving Himself.

Because a person cannot exist as self-contained, it presupposes the existence of other persons and communion with them. Personality is the highest hierarchical value and never is merely a means. But it does not exist as a value apart from its

relation to God, to other persons and to human society. Personality must come out of itself, because narrow self-centredness ruins personality. As the individual is correlative to the genus, as we saw before, so the person is correlative to human society, because a person presupposes other persons and their intercommunion. Hence it may be clear how the narrow isolation in modern individualism is the destruction and not the triumph of personality. Another consequence is, that the struggle for the genus as fought by the individual, in Nazism with race-distinction as well as in Marxism with only material ends in view, does not leave any value for personality. Comte, Karl Marx and Durkheim denied personality and believed that only the individual is correlative to the social group; they, therefore, denied 'this luminous point whose name is the self'.

*III. The human person and society*

We have seen that it is essential for personality to tend towards communion. The person by virtue of his dignity as well as of his needs requires to be a member of society, of society proper, that is human society. The fact of his being open to communications of knowledge and of love requires the relations with other persons in order to super-abound from the very depth of his being in life, in intelligence, in love. His being in need, demands that he be integrated in a body without which it is impossible for him to attain to his full achievement and perfection. What is meant are not only material needs like bread and clothes, but most of all the need for others in order to be capable of acting according to reason and virtue.

The aim of society is not the individual good of each person which constitutes it. That would mean the 'anarchy of atoms' as it was represented in the anarchic liberal conception of individualistic (mark: not personalistic) liberalism, according to which the duty of society consists in seeing that the freedom of each should be respected, although this permitted the strong freely to oppress the feeble. This is one of the reasons why the

distinction between individuality and personality should be stressed so much. The freedom of the person must imitate the freedom of God, who is the most free and therefore the most bountiful to all His creatures.

The aim of society is, on the contrary, its common good. That means the common good of human persons, because society is made up of human persons. It may be clear that this may lead to errors of the collectivist or totalitarian type. The common good of society is neither a simple collection of private goods, nor a good belonging to a whole which (as is the case of the species in relation to its *individual* members) draws the parts to itself, as if they were pure means to serve society alone. The common good is the good human life, capable of attaining its full perfection. It is, therefore, common to the whole and to the parts. Such a good implies and demands the fundamental rights of the person. It involves, as its chief value, the highest possible accession (an accession compatible with the good of the whole) of persons to their life as persons, and to their freedom of expansion, as well as to the communication of goodness which in turn proceeds from it. Only on the condition that the common good is in accordance with justice and with the moral good can it ensure the greatest possible development of the human persons.

It may be clear from what has been said, that there is a typical paradox in social life. And here we will find once more the distinction between individuality and personality. For each man is altogether an individual and altogether a person.

The person as such is a whole, generous and open, and if society were a society of pure persons, the good of the society and the good of the persons would be one and the same good. But man is as yet far from being a pure person. The human person *de facto* is also an unfortunate material individual and as a person he is full of needs. These are the reasons why it happens that, when such a person enters into society, he becomes a part of a whole—a whole which is larger and better than its parts

in so far as they are parts. According not to his entire self but to all the complements which he derives from society and without which he would remain in latent life, the human person is a part of a larger whole, a whole which surpasses the person in so far as the latter is a part and in so far as the common good is other than the good of each and than the sum of the good of each. In so far as the human person entering society is a material individuality, he enters as a part whose good is inferior to the good of the whole. As the whole of persons, society is a whole of wholes. But because of the person's destination to the absolute, and because he is called to fulfil a destiny superior to time, the human person as spiritual totality surpasses all temporal societies and is superior to them. And so it is to the perfect achievement of the person and of his supra-temporal aspirations, that society itself and its common good are subordinated under another order which transcends it.

A single human soul is worth more than the whole universe of bodies and material goods. There is nothing above the human person except God. In regard, therefore, to the eternal destiny of the soul and its supra-temporal goods, society exists for each person and is subordinated to it. While the person as such is a totality, the individual as such is a part. Therefore, while the person, as person or as totality, demands that the common good of temporal society should flow back to him, and while through his ordination to the transcendent whole, he even surpasses the temporal society—mark well: not the spiritual and transcendent society of religion—the same person, as an individual or as a part, is inferior to the social whole and must serve the common cause as a member of the whole.

The first consequence is, as Iqbal puts it, that 'personality is a state of tension and can continue only if that state is maintained. If the state of tension is not maintained relaxation will ensue. Since personality or the state of tension is the most valuable achievement of man, he should see that he does not revert to a state of relaxation. That which tends to maintain the state of

tension tends to make us immortal', only for the last few words we must substitute: tends to make us perfect, because our soul is immortal and supra-temporal by itself. (Introduction to *The Secrets of the Self*, p. xvi.)

Another consequence is: a state of tension and conflict which human society inevitably involves. Society naturally tends to enslave the person and to diminish him in so far as this person by society is considered as a simple part and therefore as a simple material individual. The human person, however, wishes to serve the common good freely while tending at the same time towards its own plenitude by surpassing itself and by surpassing the community in his movement towards the transcendent Whole, God. Yet in so far as he is a material individuality, the person is obliged to serve the community and the common good and even by constraint is surpassed by them, as the part by the whole.

These tensions and paradoxes cause conflicts whose solution can only be dynamic, but never static. The double motion thus caused is of a much deeper nature than the dialectic motion of the Marxists. We could describe it as follows:

Society moves to progression which operates most of all by the energies of spirit and freedom, but which is continually thwarted by forces of inertia and degradation; this movement tends to bring the law of personality to prevail over the law of individuality in social life, i.e., it tends towards the realization of man's aspirations to be treated in social life itself as a whole and not as a part. Here only love, which voluntarily assumes what otherwise would have been servitude, must transfigure it into freedom and free gifts. On the other side we have the notion of the life of free persons as part of the social community. The person always wants society and yet always tends to surpass it.

Let us briefly summarize the position: the human person is a part of the political community and is inferior to the latter according to the things which compensate in him the needs of

material individuality, i.e., according to the things which in him and of him depend as to their very essence on the community and which can be called upon to serve as means for the temporal good of this community. Yet on the other side the human person as a superior whole dominates the community according to the things which belong to the ordination of the person as such to the absolute, i.e., to something higher than society namely the supra-temporal achievements of the person as a person. Mathematical truths, for instance, do not depend on the social community and concern the order of absolute goods of the person as such. Therefore, a community will never have the right to force a mathematician to hold as true one mathematical system in preference to another. The same holds good for any other truth or value which concerns the spiritual order.

*IV. The person in democracy*

The community too easily only recognizes what belongs to the world of matter, meanwhile being blind to the reality of the spirit. It sees in man only the shadow of real personality, namely the material individuality. The consequence is that the person is enslaved to the social body. There are three types of doctrines which ignore the human person:

(*a*) Bourgeois-liberalism which considered the individual (not the person) as a little god and which was based on the absolute liberty of property, of commerce and of pleasures of life. It ended inevitably in étatisme because the rule of numbers produces all too easily the omnipotence of the State. If man is only a material individuality, therefore only a part and not a whole, the individual will finally find himself entirely subjected to the social whole.

(*b*) Communism is a reaction against this liberalism and individualism, which both are so very opposed to the

Christian spirit and to the spirit of any religion. It pretends to aim at the absolute liberation of man in order to make him the god of history; were this liberation to succeed it would be the liberation of collective man and not of the human person.

(*c*) Dictatorship starts from the sovereign dignity of the State either in the name of the spirit, it may even be in the name of God in a kind of wrongly applied theocracy or of a people (Volksgeist) or in the name of race and blood in order to annex the entire person to the social whole.

All three of them consider man as a material individuality and do not recognize in man the eternal and spiritual element. They are, therefore, incapable of furthering the real common good.

Over and against these three types of society stands democracy, not as something new, which has only started in our time, but as a system which already has a long history even though its records are not always clean and right. In his book on 'The two sources of morality and religion' Bergson emphasizes the original religious character of the democratic ideal. This is true in general. But we must not forget that there are kinds of democracy such as that of Rousseau's which base everything on the native goodness and native freedom of the *individual* (not of the person), a fictitious individual like Emile, shut up in himself. Democracy of the individual arises from an anthropocentric inspiration; materialism, atheism and dictatorship are its fatalities. Did not Hegel say that the State is the supreme reality, which possesses a plenitude and self-sufficiency of being, far surpassing that of the person? By saying to men, you are gods by your own essence and will, this kind of bourgeois-democracy has debased man; and the consequence was egoism and the excessive longing for material possessions.

On the other hand, democracy of the person is a theocentric inspiration and its aim is freedom in the social as well as in the spiritual order. We mean: freedom of expansion of the person, of exultation and of autonomy so far as it conforms to the image of God. Iqbal says:

It is wrong to utter a bad word.
The infidel as well as the faithful are God's creations.
Humanity consists in respect for man; So acquaint thyself with the dignity of man.
The man of love takes his guidance from God and is kind to the faithful and the infidel alike.

True democracy says: you are gods by the gift and the calling of God; you are gods in becoming and in suffering and hope; gods by means of humanity, virtue and grace. The weight of man is the weight of love. This democracy dignifies the creature really in God and as made by God and for God, but not illusively as God itself. It knows the grandeur of man as well as his misery, his misery when he falls short of the ideal. It respects the human dignity not as something abstract but in each concrete person.

If democracy is to succeed it must refine the sense of justice as applied to persons and not as applied to individuals, and also the sense of risk and heroism. 'Let love burn all thy doubts, be subservient only to the truth which will turn thee into a lion,' says Iqbal. Democracy must reject the materialistic philosophy of individualism and accept the true spiritual values which are born from the truth that man as an image of God has an inalienable right of freedom of conscience, freedom of choice of religion, of spontaneity and initiative in all its dynamism and creative activity.

# 16

## DANTE AND IQBAL

ALESSANDRO BAUSANI

'MAN in this many-coloured world is at every instant full of laments, like the lute . . . the sea, the desert, the hills, and the grass, are dumb, deaf and dumb are the sky, the sun and the moon. Even though high up in the skies are stars without number, each one of these is ever more solitary than the rest; each is just as desperate as we are, like us vagrant in the blue expanse of the skies. How like a caravan that has not taken sufficient provisions for the long journey, for whom the skies are infinite and slow the nights. Perhaps this world is a prey and we are the hunters: or are we not perhaps only forgotten prisoners: Oh, happy the day that does not belong to the time, whose morning has neither noon nor evening—a day from whose light the spirit draws light and mysterious things become visible to its splendours.'

The initial sadness of Iqbal's 'Celestial Poem' finds its parallel in Dante's 'Dark Wood': for Iqbal it is the feeling, I should call it the *rage*, of man conscious of his limitations when placed in front of the infinite; of impotent man who will not be satisfied with anything less than omnipotence of man shut in by high walls who aspires over All. That is the reason for which Iqbal starts on his voyage to the skies—he goes to shatter them. 'How to get to the presence of God'—he asks his Virgil, 'how to smash mountains of water and earth? He who commands and creates is beyond the order of creation and we are nearly throttled by the iron fist of destiny.'

The aim of Dante's voyage is quite different: Dante seems to barely touch this problem in the song of Ulysses. Dante, in fact, starts on his voyage to purify himself so as to be able to arrive at a contemplation of God.

I said 'different', but in truth, looking deeper and more attentively, not so different as it at first seems. Because Iqbal's voyage of conquest is possible only after Dante has returned from his voyage of purification. Let not Iqbal, a profoundly religious spirit, be taken for one of those Godless existentialist progressives of which our world is full to-day. He says: 'Carve another world according to thy desires: but give not your heart to colours, perfumes, the earth and its ways: the heart is sacred to Him, do not give it to anyone but Him.'

And elsewhere he stressed the difference between a *slave* and a *slave of God.* The slave is despicable—but without submission to God, without this divine slavery, man remains eternally impotent and limited.

In Dante's world, so Greek and harmonic, man has under the semblance of Faust once again tried to feel his sense of slavery of God, and failed. Iqbal does not propose to return to Dante, but on the contrary starts on a new voyage, which is a frantic 'go' towards that God who is 'beyond order and creation'. Thus Iqbal's impulse really becomes 'power' and not only agitation.

Iqbal's celestial voyage has initially something which renders it different from Dante's. There is no voyage through Hell here, nor is there so much talk of sin. The itinerary, an itinerary of conquest which already presumes victory over at least the minor forms of sin, begins with a startling '*Prolog in Himmel*' in which, on the first day of Creation, Heaven reproaches Earth for its heavy crass materialism and blindness, but the Earth nevertheless receives the consoling promise from God Himself who says that He—to use the Koranic expression —will establish there a Vicar, Man, the end of physical evolution and the beginning of a still more surprising spiritual evolu-

tion. 'Still he entwists himself in nature—the angels sing of him—but he will be harmonic one day.'

Dante's 'Prologue in Heaven' stands under the sign of redeeming femininity—Mary, Lucy and that Beatrice of whom the poet sings 'her eyes glittered more brightly than the stars'; in Iqbal instead it stands under the hazy distant omen of the inimitable power of man.

On earth Iqbal finds his Virgil in Rumi, the great mystic Persian poet of the thirteenth century, who is to be numbered among the greatest mystics of all times, and the poet starts on his voyage with the words of the so profoundly modern verses of the Master echoing in his ears:

*Alas, what we are searching for cannot be found*
*But a voice within me said: 'It is just what is unfindable that I desire . . .'*

And we see Iqbal, in his journey through successive heavens, surpassing the heaven of the Moon where he had discussed with the Indian sage Vishvamitra (Purified human wisdom) and pondered on the four grand manifestations of the Divine Power, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ and Muhammad. In the heaven of Mercury, Iqbal has the opportunity of reasoning with the great Oriental politicians, such as Jamal-uddin al-Afghani and Said Halim Pasha, on capitalism and communism, on the Eastern and Western world. With remarkable balance he recognizes the positive function of communism, namely that of destroying an old and hypocritical world while contemporarily criticizing its impotence—to shape a really new world, as the prophets had succeeded in doing because it is devoid of a superior spirituality. He sees in the democratic theocracy of Islam (God and God alone, Lord of everything; everybody equal in so far as all are slaves of God; nobody possessing anything because everything belongs to God) the only solution for the problems of the World.

The sky of Venus is particularly anti-European, with its attacks against archæologists, revaluators of the past paganism, and the attack on Kitchener for his cruelties against the Mahdists in the Sudan.

Having shattered this sky here is our poet on Mars, a sort of earth whose Adam had not given in to Satan's blandishments and had instead thrown him down, woe to us, on Earth. Afterwards he goes to Jupiter, one of the most beautiful skies, which is dedicated to the spirits of the three great 'heretics' of Islam—Hallaj, Ghalib and the Persian poetess Qurratul Ain Tahira, who created—says the Poet—new worlds with their sacrifices. Tahira's figure, in the discreet and modest beginning of her speech after the many disquisitions of the others, recalls Dante's 'Pia de' Tolomei': 'Also from the sin of the crazy servant new creatures may arise: Limitless love tears every veil, takes away from sight every old thing. And at the end he has in sight rope and gallows: one does not return alive from the way of the Friend.'

It is a strange coincidence that just in the same sky of Jupiter, Christian Dante also placed two pagan souls, Rifeus and Trajan. Pagans in Heaven! This is an important point of contact, this virile tolerance, better skill, understanding towards everything which is sincere, amongst the great spirits. Dante was just as good a Catholic as Iqbal was a Muslim: but the former gave way to the majestic generosity of the Roman Emperor and the latter, perhaps more heroically, as it is sometimes more difficult to understand a heretic than a pagan, gave way when confronted by the sweet figure of Tahira, throttled at Teheran in 1852, and the martyrdom of Hallaj, who was crucified at Baghdad in 922.

'Regnum Coelorum violenza pate
Da caldo amore e da viva speranza
Che vince la divina volontate'

And it is just in this Heaven that Satan sings his lament, tired of man's cowardice.

The next Heaven, that of Saturn, gives hospitality to the traitors, I was about to say 'traitors to their countries', but *millat* is for Iqbal something more than 'country' understood in the national sense. Like Dante, like any other religious man, Iqbal's 'country' is the great supernational community of believers, something resembling the Holy Roman Empire. And Iqbal's contempt for the traitors of this ideal is just as strong as Dante's, who places them at the very lowest step of Hell.

We are now on the boundaries of the Heavens: but the uneasy search sends Iqbal even 'beyond the Heavens'. And here a soul presents itself to him singing: 'Neither angels, nor Paradise, nor Huri, nor God, only a fistful of earth burnt by the diurnal desire of the heart.' This is the spirit of Nietzsche which, symbol of the reach towards the complete surpassing of every spiritual value, arises on the boundary of the created world and is stretched towards the great void of God.

It is moving to see poor Nietzsche, so hated by all the falsely pious and hypocrites of every religion, at last welcomed, even though only on the tenuous wings of art, in heaven, nay, more, 'beyond the Heavens'. And it is not through chance that this religious revaluation of Nietzsche has fallen on a representative of that religion which, perhaps more radically than any other, exalts the attributes of the 'Power' of God.

'He was a Hallaj,' Iqbal says, 'stranger to his country: he saved his life from the priests and was killed by physicians!' Nietzsche never succeeded in surpassing—says Iqbal—the destructive phase of his thought to write something positive on that *blank page* which according to Schopenhauer is all that remains of all vain human chatter, but 'what he created is the stage of Divine power, and this sublime stage is beyond reason and wisdom'.

After Nietzsche we find ourselves in the real and proper Paradise, with its phantasmagorical gardens, the palaces of

Oriental Kings and the beautiful *Huris*. And in the *noble castle* (the Dantesque expression comes natural in this case in spite of the distance of the two places: which fact has its significance) Iqbal stops to speak with the great spirits. But only the sight of the Eternal Beauty of God can satisfy him and he therefore abandons even Paradise, singing to the astounded *Huris*:

'Embrace once more the rose bush and absorb water and dew . . . Oh pale being, what are you looking for in the breeze?'

The last part of Iqbal's poem is particularly interesting; the few words exchanged with the Eternal Beauty, which at the end reveals Itself to the poet, end with a hymn in which there is a breath of that Oriental superiority over the world and the non-world, over the ancient and the modern, and that mystic detachment which Iqbal had so often criticized in his co-religionaries seems to return once more. But it is a detachment which leads to activity not to a sterile lack of interest.

'Abandon the East and let not the magic of the West enchant you, as all the ancient and the modern is not worth a grain of barley: Oh! you who form part of the caravan, free yourself from all and go with everybody. You have come here shining more brightly than the sun which lightens the whole world: live in such a way as to throw light over every atom of dust.'

It would be useless and unimportant for me to compare Dante and Iqbal on the artistic plane. Art cannot be compared. But in this divided world of ours the exchange of views between those great spirits, who are consolation to us by their very existence, places us, whether willing or not, before a world of real unity of thought.

Deep differences certainly remain: Iqbal if nothing less, lived six or seven centuries later than the Florentine exile, and belongs to a different religious tradition than Dante's. Aristotle's settled ordered world is by no means acceptable to Iqbal. On the contrary, Iqbal has words of harsh criticism for Greek philosophy, which according to him has ruined the pure

theism of primitive Christian philosophy by its rationalism, theologizing and pagan ritualism.

But in a world which has nearly completely forgotten its religious sentiments and which, depersonalizing God, had dissolved a more or less romantic divinity in things and History, Iqbal in his celestial poem once more makes us listen to a biblical voice. I should call it a voice which is certainly more similar to that of Dante than are certain voices of our world.

Abdul Quddus of Gangoh, a mystic Muslim in referring to the mysterious voyage to heaven of the Prophet Muhammad, said: 'Muhammad of Arabia rose to the highest Heaven and came back. I declare that had I reached that spot I would not have again descended.' And the difference between the *Prophet*, the man who from contact with God receives a renewed creative impulse, and the *Mystic* who would have liked to prepare a tent for himself is obvious. Iqbal receives from the *Eternal Beauty* an invitation to action and his message is a message of a prophetic, not mystical, type.

The desire to see his religious experience transformed into a living world force—he writes in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*—distinguishes the mystic from the prophet. Iqbal is not one of those tired mystics of the East, which too many of us Europeans admire, but neither is he an unreligious activist, a frenetic adorer of action for action's sake.

Before acting he ascended to heaven, and we must be careful in taking his revaluation of *self* too literally and giving it a meaning which is only too habitual for us Westerners to give. Iqbal is a socialist because he is religious in that typical originally Islamic sense, that Koranic sense, even Semitic I should say, with a too simple and, in our case, paradoxical racial transposition, for whom a harmonic fixed order of the universe according to the Greek conception and also according to Dante's conception, does not exist.

Ulysses, who after all is very little Greek in the Dantesque version, is certainly the character which Iqbal has liked most

in the Divine Poem and is the joining link between the two poets. Ulysses who is perhaps Dante's most anti-classical character, being more Christian than Pagan, is placed through a strange destiny in Hell, sacrificed to that Christian Aristotelianism which placed insurmountable barriers to that static universe which the first martyrs had smashed in their overwhelming joy of self-immolation.

'In truth *towards God* is your limit.' This deep Koranic saying gives Iqbal an infinite view over the world. Nature is for him a '*Habit of God*'. The radically theistic Islamic doctrine of successive and eternal creation, through atoms of time, of the entire universe ever and continually redestroyed, fascinates him. And in this he sees the radical liberation from every type of fatalism and slavery to matter. Dante's Ulysses is in a certain way Iqbal's precursor, and Iqbal would, I think, perfectly agree with me should I say that all the Ulysses in Europe have developed themselves under the sign of atheism through the fault of the strong tie of our religious tradition with the Greek pre-Christian form, the Aristotelian form, which was that which condemned Ulysses.

Now Iqbal, a Ulysses redeemed by this Aristotelian condemnation through the anti-classicism of the Koran (as he puts it) is about to start on his ascent to the heavens, and this time not Titanically, but with the approval and encouragement of God. The ascent is of a nature different from Dante's because in this Man plays the prevailing part—but it is the *complete* Man who has behind him the purifying experience of Dante's voyage and the admonishment of Faust's damnation.

And this new Man, put forward for us by Iqbal has, I think, also something to teach us; better still, the experience of these great celestial travellers like Dante and Iqbal has three lessons to impart to us:

*First:* that tolerance and all those so-called virtues of modern man are not in contradiction to the simple strong faith in the transcendental. 'Wherever you turn'—to use a Koranic sen-

tence—'there the countenance of God stands,' and perhaps still better than anybody else he who is near God can place in heaven Trajan, Hallaj and Tahira.

*Second:* Man, who is merely an impotent being completed by Him who is 'nearer to him than his jugular vein' becomes omnipotent and creator of new spiritual worlds.

*Third:* to achieve this, a preliminary act of submission is necessary: in Dante's philosophy it is repentance, in Iqbal's a declaration of slavery—but slavery of *God* and only of God. Of that God whose glory penetrates through all the Universe.

And now, beyond those skies which are the many-coloured veils of dogmas and laws and which perhaps in the contingent world would have kept them apart, and for some shortsighted persons still does keep them apart to-day, the spirits of Dante and Iqbal will be able to exist in perfect harmony, which I hope may be the symbol and forecast of a still more visible harmony on this Earth, to exalt that only God with the words of the Koran (24, 35):

*God is the light of the heavens and the earth; His light is as a niche in which is a lamp, and the lamp is in a glass, the glass is as though it were a glittering star; it is lit from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the east nor of the west, the oil of which would well-nigh give light though no fire touched it—light upon light!*